Washington MONTHLY

Volume 38, No. 1 & 2
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Letters

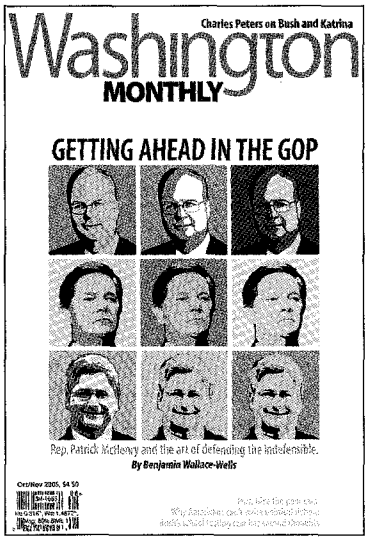
On the Road Again

Margy Waller ("Auto-Mobility," October/November) is correct that automobiles will not be going away any time soon and that the poor need better ways to access jobs. Somehow providing the means for many more Americans to own a car is surely a well-meaning idea. But instead of digging our graves deeper by making even more of us desperately dependent on the volatile, unsustainable and devastating oil economy, we should be talking about giving people more choice and autonomy as to where they can live and how they can get around: for example, allowing people to choose among driving to work, living closer to their jobs (including in the suburbs, where unfair regulations all but prohibit lower-cost housing options), using dependable and convenient transit, and taking a job closer to where they live (i.e., bringing jobs to existing developed areas).

Waller is correct that transit systems today cannot effectively serve both central cities and the sprawling suburban countryside. But over time—indeed, over a relatively short span of 25 years—that can change if we want it to. In a recent Brookings Institution report, Professor Arthur C. Nelson of Virginia Tech writes that, as of 2030, fully one half of all the buildings in which Americans will live and work will have been built after the year 2000.

We still have the opportunity to vastly influence the shape and location of future growth and development in this country. This is the future of choice, of personal and family autonomy instead of one marked by the unaffordable promise of publicly subsidized car and commuting costs for every wage-earner—with all the wide-ranging adverse implications of such a public policy, both foreign and domestic. The former is the future we should be seeking to create, instead of reinforcing the latter.

Lee Epstein
Silver Spring, Md.



October/November 2005

It's hard to know where to begin to respond to Margy Waller's bizarre proposal to spend $100 billion to support auto commuting.

First, there is the serious question about national funding priorities. Why, when our roads and bridges are crumbling—not only in the devastated Gulf Coast, but all across America—should we be adding to our burden by funding an increase in auto use?

Although the price tag for Waller's proposal is significant, it doesn't begin to address the total costs involved. Individuals will be burdened with fuel, maintenance, and insurance costs, which, according to the AAA, can run as high as $5,000 or more annually. Governments at all levels will have to add roadway capacity and parking spaces—multiplying the initial cost several-fold. Without these additional investments, the entire road network would be at risk of collapse. Witness Houston's evacuation experience: Traffic backed up for more than 40 miles as thousands tried to use the freeways at the same time. In New Orleans, it would have been worse. If those stranded in the city without transport as Katrina approached had had access to a car, as Waller proposes, the traffic jam there would have brought the entire freeway system to a halt, exposing even more people to the hurricane's wrath. Adding just a few cars to an already overburdened roadway—even in the best of circumstances—is ultimately self-defeating, as traffic engineers and most drivers know all too well.

The good news is that people around the country are beginning to understand that providing a range of transportation choices is better than relying on a single solution. In cities across the country, Americans are voting to invest more in transit. They're taking a serious look at better land-use patterns, realizing the personal and community benefits of walking and bicycling, and starting to build inter-modal facilities that allow people to combine the options that best suit their needs. The results are revitalized cities, increased accessibility to jobs, and reduced costs for all workers. This approach has already reaped benefits in the Portland, Ore., metropolitan region; the average household there has a shorter commute and pays 5 percent less of its budget on transportation than a similar household in Houston, which is only starting to realize the benefits of balanced transportation.

Yes, the private automobile is an important component of our transportation network, but promoting it to provide better access to jobs only increases the costs to workers, employers, and our communities.

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-Ore.)
Washington, D.C.

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Subscription Rates: U.S. and possessions: one year, $44.95; two years, $79.95; three years, $109.95. For Canadian and foreign subscriptions, add $10 for surface delivery; air mail delivery add $32. Back issues, $5. The Washington Monthly is indexed in the Book Review Index, Political Science Abstracts, Public Affairs Information Service, the Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature, and Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory and may be obtained on microfilm from University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Published monthly except combined Jan./Feb. and July/Aug. issues by The Washington Monthly, LLC, wholly owned by W.M. Corporation, a District of Columbia nonprofit corporation.

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ISSN 0043-0633. Postmaster: Send change of address to The Washington Monthly, 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005. Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C. and at additional mailing offices. Unsolicited manuscripts must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope unless emailed:

Editorial offices: 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 520, Washington, DC 20005; tel: 202-393-5155 / fax: 202-393-2444
Publishing offices: 916 Kearny Street, San Francisco, CA 94133; tel: 415-402-0252 / fax: 415-402-0922

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Margy Waller responds:

Unfortunately, Rep. Blumenauer mischaracterizes my proposal as helping only those who drive to work. I propose to lower the effective tax on work by providing relief for workers who expend limited resources on commuting and the poorest families who've had to forgo economic opportunity because they cannot afford a car. This change in our national tax policy would benefit working families (households with income under $52,000) who must drive to work—as 88 percent of workers do today—as well as those who can take transit.

Rep. Blumenauer seems to say he opposes my proposal because in an emergency (and presumably during everyday commutes as well) the well-off residents with cars might more likely be stuck in traffic if poorer families are also on the road. Does Rep. Blumenauer mean that he is willing to continue to consign poor workers to inadequate public transit in order to make sure the wealthy are not delayed? Is he truly content to live with a system that exposes only the poor to a hurricane?

Is Rep. Blumenauer serious when he suggests that there are other national funding priorities that are more important than the economic and homeland security of working Americans? How long must working families in this country wait for "our national funding priorities" to include them? The immediate and extensive access needs of these families demand a response from our government now.

His "analysis" of differences between Portland and Houston misses the point of my article. In fact, even in Portland almost everyone commutes in a private vehicle and less than 6 percent of workers in the region use transit to get to work. However, the evidence strongly suggests that low-income families work and earn more when they have a car. Unfortunately, they are the priority too many so-called progressives are willing to sacrifice on the altar of their "PC" policy agenda.

It's true that voters in many places have supported local investment in transit—but usually it's transit that meets the needs of well-to-do rail riders. I say that when affluent families use transit at rates approaching those of low-income workers we can start talking about sharing the wait for a ride. Until then, policy should not hold hostage the income prospects of low-income workers and the children that depend on them until the rest of us "understand" the need to pass enough bond debt to pay for improved transit.

Bungled Ballots

In his review of my book, *Steal This Vote: Dirty Elections and the Rotten History of Democracy in America*, Phil Keisling ("Early and Often," October/November) suggests there is a simple catch-all solution to the problems of electoral malfeasance and mismanagement: voting by mail (VBM). That is the system he introduced in Oregon when he was Secretary of State there, so it's understandable he should feel proud, even a little defensive, of his achievement.

Unfortunately, his reasoning falls right into what, in the book, I term the fallacy of the technological fix. For the past century, reformers have fantasized that if only they could come up with the right mechanism for voting, all the problems associated with elections would magically go away. The punch-card voting machine, which became the butt of jokes in the wake of the 2000 presidential debacle in Florida and a byword for electoral dysfunction, was

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hailed as just such a miracle machine in the early 1960s. So, too, were the computer touch-screen machines brought in to replace punch cards in Florida's aftermath that are now viewed with suspicion by many leading computer scientists and the General Accounting Office.

The fallacious thinking in all cases is that it is the voting mechanism that needs to be fixed, when in fact it is America's political culture that is principally to blame. I'm willing to believe voting by mail can work in a state like Oregon, which has a relatively small, relatively stable population and a fair-minded political culture.

In Florida, though, things look very different. The fluidity of the population makes balloting by mail hard to organize even under honest management; often people in certain political target areas (like Democrat-leaning Little Haiti in Miami) have complained that their absentee ballot applications have been mishandled or gone unprocessed altogether. A mayoral election in Miami in 1997 was overturned after the courts found evidence of wide-scale fraud involving mail-in ballots—ballots with very similar security safeguards used in Keisling's Oregon. In Palm Beach County in 2004, the electoral authorities decided mail-in envelopes should have the party registration of the individual voter printed on the front—an open invitation to malicious intervention by anyone from the mailman to a partisan poll worker.

Given the shenanigans we saw in several states in both 2000 and 2004, there is no reason to suppose an all-mail system would be any less subject to abuse. Who's to say that political operatives in a battleground state wouldn't simply steal absentee ballots out of people's mailboxes in areas known to lean heavily to the other party? Doesn't vote-by-mail make it easier for parties to pay people for their votes? Such things have happened in the past, and can easily happen again.

Whatever mail-in voting is, it is far from ideal. It also raises serious constitutional questions. The Third U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals threw out every last mail-in ballot in the 1997 Miami fraud case, arguing that absentee voting was a "privilege," not a right. That's an unsettling precedent, one that a Supreme Court dominated by Justices Scalia, Thomas, Roberts and—perhaps—Alito is unlikely to undo any time soon.

Andrew Gumbel
Los Angeles, Calif.

Phil Keisling responds:

I never claimed that voting by mail would make elections fraud-proof and problem-free. I did express dismay that Gumbel's only mention of this proven reform was a backhanded reference to 36,000 allegedly fraudulent ballots in Oregon's 2000 vote-by-mail election—a phony statistic he should recant, but still hasn't.

All election systems can and must use technology. And I endorsed Gumbel's conclusion: Touch-screen, Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) voting machines reflect an all-too-common stampede to apply a relatively untested, "latest and greatest" technology to voting.

However, he apparently missed my point about the 18th (not 21st) century nature of vote by mail "technology." The rush to embrace DREs is not dissimilar to the "too cheap to meter" rush to build nuclear power plants. Energy conservation—caulking windows, improving motors, and insulating walls—is ordinary and familiar stuff.

Yet after Chernobyl, nuclear power apologists urged new and expensive fixes—just as many (including Gumbel) ignore VBM's benefits, and now endorse expensive, complicated changes to make the fundamentally flawed DRE "even better" by creating paper receipts.

Oregonians like compliments as well as anyone, but we're no "electoral Shangri-La." In the last 20 years, we've had massive election fraud by a religious cult, the resignation of a U.S. senator, and the recent imprisonment of a powerful state legislator for campaign finance fraud. And like Florida, our citizens move around a lot, too (in one study, 20 percent in a four-year cycle). We have a large and burgeoning immigrant population–from second-home owners (not everyone wants to retire to Florida) to people from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Southeast Asia.

That many states, including Florida, have flaws in a whole range of election processes simply "proves" the importance of paying attention and making changes accordingly. Oregon verifies every signature on a mailed-in ballot against the voting registration card—a safeguard that still doesn't exist in many states (all of which use absentee ballots). Oregon no longer prints party registration on general election ballots; it serves no useful purpose.

Opponents in our state also parrot Gumbel's speculation about possible spousal coercion, stealing from mail boxes, and faked signatures, etc., without tangible evidence. It's not that these scenarios are impossible. But basic safeguards, reporting mechanisms, felony-level penalties, and the watchful eyes of fierce partisans—yes, Oregon has them, too!— make this system work. Our 85 percent turnout of registered voters in November 2004 speaks volumes.

Cynics are adept at making the "perfect" the enemy of the good—not to mention the "much better." I hope Gumbel isn't a cynic, and personally invite him to visit Oregon to see for himself. He'll find many (including me) who agree that changes in our political culture are also important. He may still remain a vote-by-mail skeptic. But I think he'll find that Oregon is less different than he imagines—except in being more able to make elections work.

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Tilting at **Windmills**

by **Charles Peters**

Make sure the inspectors wear bells on their shoes

If you doubt the Bush administration's commitment to the welfare of private business, consider the recent deal the Department of Labor made with Wal-Mart. It promised to give 15 days advance notice before inspecting for child-labor violations. You can see the scene now: "Sam, we gotta hide these kids." Actually, considering that it's Wal-Mart, it probably has some super-efficient method of keeping the minors out of sight until the inspector leaves.

Up in smoke

What has happened to all the money from the $250-billion tobacco settlement? If you thought it was being used to keep kids from smoking, or to help the addicted kick the habit, you are wrong. Less than 3 percent has been used for these purposes, according to ABC's Brian Ross. How has the money been used? In New York, some of it was invested in golf course sprinklers. In Virginia, "a large portion" went to improve an auto speedway. And—you won't believe this—in North Carolina, "tobacco warehouses were built with the money."

Accountability is for the little people

"CIA is likely to avoid charges in most prisoner deaths" was a recent headline in *The New York Times*. It is truly amazing how the higher-ups have avoided punishment despite one prisoner-abuse scandal after another, while Lynndie England gets slammed with three years. What outrages me even more is that all the evidence at the England trial related to her mental and emotional suitability demonstrated conclusively that the Army should never have assigned her to Abu Ghraib, and probably should not have recruited her in the first place. There is a terrible cruelty in the Army's misusing a human being and then blaming her for the consequences.

Failing health

Those who scorn socialized medicine might ponder two recent findings from a study by the Commonwealth Fund of 6,957 recently hospitalized patients from the United States, Britain and five other countries with state-run health care. Thirty-four percent of Americans were victims of medical errors, but only 22 percent of Britons. Half of the Americans reported going without medical treatment because of its cost, but only 13 percent of Britons. The United States came out worst of all the countries in these two categories.

Another category in which the United States led was in the number of patients reporting problems with coordination of their care. In the case of my seriously ill friends, this has been the most maddening problem of all: Physicians who don't bother to talk to each other even though they're treating the same patient.

The post-Me! Me! era

Michael Bloomberg's campaign may have found a way out of the interest group politics that have divided this nation in recent years. Or at least they may have broadened the groups. What Bloomberg's consultant, the firm of Penn, Schoen, and Berland, has done is emphasize finding common interests among voters instead of classifying them on the basis of racial, cultural, and ideological differences. They hope this method will help transcend the differences between red and blue states. I pray they're right. Anyway, it's good to see someone trying it and seeing it seem to work in at least one election. Since Hillary Clinton is one of the Penn firm's clients, this approach just might soon make it to the national stage.

District follies

To keep you up to date on the District of Columbia's government, the latest unsettling news to emerge involves Jeffrey DeWhite Edwards, described by *The Washington Times* as "one of the district's top asbestos regulators." According to court records, Edwards offered this deal to an asbestos removal company: He would soften the rules governing asbestos removal in return for $10,000 cash. The company, in an unusual display of ethical corporate behavior, went to the FBI, and Edwards was arrested.

District follies, part II

Before we leave D.C., we should bring you up to date on the local ambulance dispatchers. Their latest fiasco came when they had a choice of two ambulances to send to a serious auto accident. One ambulance was 12.4 miles away; the other just 1.8 miles away. Guess which one the dispatcher chose? The first, of course, which proceeded to fight its way through traffic all the way from far Northwest Washington to far Southeast.

The Rice stuff

I have not been one of Condoleezza Rice's big fans, but I very much admired her recent effort, including an all-nighter, in the negotiations that brought about the agreement giving the people of Gaza access to the outside world. This is the first time that I can recall that the Bush administration has done anything but give lip service to the cause of peace between Israel and the Palestinians, usually offered as part of brief meetings at the White House, or equally short stopovers on presidential trips. You can see Bush saying, "I'm really

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concerned" as he looks at his watch. There has been nothing like the noble effort that Bill Clinton made to bring the parties together.

In general, Rice seems to be performing better in her current role than she did on the White House staff. Maybe putting a little distance between herself and that gang has been good for her.

The best bad option

I opposed the invasion of Iraq and have been pretty much in the cut-and-run camp since then. The counter-argument that gives me the most trouble is that, having upset the applecart, we have an obligation to stay until we put it back together. I was troubled by a similar argument about Vietnam: Even if we shouldn't have gotten involved, or never have escalated that involvement, we had led freedom-loving South Vietnamese to rely on us, and we should not bail out on them.

This argument had little resonance on the left because its basic article of faith was that all but the most corrupt South Vietnamese were closet Vietcong. The hundreds of thousands of South Vietnamese who fled after the North took over have constituted a fact of history the left has never wanted to acknowledge.

I'm sure that a similar situation exists today. There are probably millions of Iraqis who, even though they don't like us, would prefer our staying to a civil war between the Shi'a and the Sunni that could follow our exit. So I do not doubt that unfavorable consequences may follow from our leaving. But I'm sure there are millions of other Iraqis who really, really hate us, and will keep on trying to kill our soldiers as long as we stay. I'm also sure that they and Islamic extremists everywhere will treat our departure as a victory, just as communists all over the world celebrated North Vietnam's triumph. Still, I think that we were right to leave Vietnam, and we will be right to leave Iraq.

A saying of the late management guru Peter Drucker that I wish could be posted on every bureaucrat's wall: "One either meets or one works."

Of course, we should make every effort to leave in a responsible and orderly manner. But we should start now, and we should be out of there in six months. One certain good result of this policy is that it would end whatever terrorism is motivated solely by a desire to get rid of us.

If we stay, I concede there is a chance a democratic Iraq could emerge, one that respected the rights of its minorities who would in turn agree to practice a policy of nonviolence. But the possibility of all that happening is too remote to justify the loss of life that is occurring every day, and the terrible strain on our Army that is sapping its ability to respond to future threats from the rest of the world.

Late last fall, *The New York Times* headlined a story by its veteran Baghdad correspondent John F. Burns: "[Iraq is] still a mystery, the Americans do not know who or what to believe." *The Wall Street Journal* found a rare military officer who had a good understanding of Iraqi culture. But guess what? He's being transferred to Yemen. *The Washington Times* describes civilian government employees being sent to Iraq to share their "expertise" with the locals for guess how long? One hundred and twenty days. And *The Washington Post*'s Robin Wright, who has visited Iraq in 2003, 2004, and 2005, describes the Green Zone as "Baghdad's shrinking bubble of security." Does this sound like the heartening progress our president sees?

But now we can cut taxes again

Back to the tobacco settlement. One state, Florida, was actually doing the job right—for a while. It was spending $70 million a year on anti-smoking commercials, including a brilliantly and bitterly satiric one where smoking was given a mock award for killing the most people each year. Teenage smoking in Florida dropped 38 percent. But then the Florida legislature, obviously shocked that it had done something good for a change, cut the money for the commercials to just $1 million.

Thrown for a loop

Curveball, you will recall, was the CIA's source for the fiction about Iraq's mobile biological weapons laboratories that the Bush admin peddled to justify the war. I doubt that in the entire history of espionage, a codename has ever inspired less confidence in the reliability of a source.

Now come Bob Drogin and John Goetz of the *Los Angeles Times*, with the news that, before the Bush gang trumpeted Curveball's phony story to the world, his German handlers had warned the CIA that they "could not verify the things he said," that he was not a "psychologically stable guy," and that his information was vague and mostly second-hand.

After we had invaded Iraq, the CIA found that in 1995, Curveball had been fired from the job in which he could have had any knowledge of biological weapons, that thereafter "he had been jailed for an apparent sex crime, and that for some time he

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drove a Baghdad taxi. His childhood friends called him 'a great liar' and 'a con-artist.' " UN inspectors finally disproved Curveball's claims in 2004, but by that time, of course, the Bush gang had the war it wanted.

Funny, you don't look like an ambassador

I have tried to warn my fellow liberals that in their understandable zeal to get Libby, Rove, and Cheney, they don't swallow the CIA line that the covers it has used should be taken seriously. I now have support from Reuel Marc Gerecht, writing in *The Wall Street Journal.* Gerecht's views are sometimes too neocon, but he knows the CIA. Here's what he says:

"The vast majority of CIA officers overseas operate with little to no cover and have done so since the foundation of the post-World War II clandestine service in 1947. Most case officers posted abroad carry official cover, which usually means they serve as fake diplomats.

"Today, operational camouflage is usually shredded within weeks of a case officer's arrival at his station, since the manner, method and paperwork of operatives is just too different from real foreign-service officers.... Minimally competent foreign security services know a great deal of what occurs within U.S. embassies and consulates since these institutions are completely dependent on local employees—the State Department calls them 'foreign-service nationals'—who, through patriotism or coercion, often report on the activities of their employers.

"The situation is better with nonofficial cover officers who live overseas.... [But a]s a general rule, the more dangerous the country, the less likely the NOCs, who don't benefit from diplomatic immunity, will be stationed or visit there." In other words, the truly covert agents are mostly not where they are most needed.

Back in the mid-'70s, William Colby, who was then the head of the CIA, conceded to me that the Russians knew who our agents were. He was trying to talk me out of running an article that made clear how easy our spooks were to spot. His only argument seemed to be that I would be exposing the agents to weirdos like Lee Harvey Oswald.

Not exactly a cash cow

The Bureau of Land Management has a program under which ranchers can graze their cattle on public land for a fee. The problem is that the fee is a bit low. Where ranchers have to pay an average of $13.30 to graze a cow and calf on private land, they pay the government just $1.79. Unsurprisingly, this means the government loses money on the program.

Obviously, the private landowners would charge less, if they could afford to do so, in order to compete with the government. Why then does the Bush administration, which is constantly proclaiming its devotion to free markets, perpetuate a program that undercuts the market price? If you guess it has something to do with keeping the western states red, you just might be on the right track.

Then who are all the activist judges?

James T. Patterson points out in the *Oxford History of the United States from 1975-2000* that Ronald Reagan alone appointed almost half of all sitting federal judges. Add those appointed by Richard Nixon, Gerald Ford, and the two Bushes, and you can see that we now have a federal judiciary that is overwhelmingly conservative, which is a big reason why we Democrats must be determined to start winning presidential elections.

Who's on first?

A recent report by the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security does not inspire confidence in the reorganizations that its creation had brought about. A major step in the reshuffling was the creation of two agencies, Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Custom Enforcement (ICE). But today, according to the Inspector General, "most CBP and ICE officials are still puzzled over the decision-making concerning ICE's structure. According to them, to this day *no one* has been able to articulate the rationale for the current structure." [Emphasis added].

This year we caught Julio. Yep. Just Julio.

Speaking of the ICE, the Inspector General also found that it has what the business schools call a resource allocation problem. Of its 14,000 employees, only 51 are assigned to investigate the whereabouts of the estimated 3.6 million people who have overstayed their visas and become illegal immigrants.

Doomed to repeat

"I made assumptions about local capability that I shouldn't have made." That's what Wallace Stickney, who was director of FEMA under Bush I in 1992 at the time of the agency's first big failure, Hurricane Andrew, said when asked by Jessica Lee of New England's *Valley News* what lessons he had learned from the experience. What is maddening about this is that Michael Brown repeated the very same error when he relied on state and local response to deal with problems arising in the first 72 hours after Katrina.

Arnold's bad rap

Most of the reporting about Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's recent ballot measures focused on the politics of winning or losing and the relative power of the governor and the lobbies opposing it. I didn't see a single article in *The Washington Post* or *The New York Times* that made a serious attempt to examine the merits of the proposals. One of the measures would have granted teachers tenure only after five years' service instead of two.

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Since the inability to get rid of bad teachers is a major problem today, this proposal made sense to me. Actually, none of the other measures, although more debatable, seemed as easily dismissable as much of the press implied they were.

Missing the forest for the trees

Read *Truth and Duty*, Mary Mapes's new book about the Bush National Guard story that got her fired from CBS News and left a cloud over the reputation of her boss, Dan Rather. Although she clearly does not number a gift for self-criticism among her more conspicuous virtues, she is convincing in her demonstration that her story was essentially true, and that those reporters who focused on her minor errors—which includes almost everyone who covered the story—missed the major point.

The result was that the press allowed itself to be conned by the right into allowing Bush to escape the truth about his non-service while Kerry was being pilloried with unproved charges of cowardice even though the evidence showed that he was a legitimate war hero. In this case at least, the media was more fascinated by the possible misdeeds of one of its stars than it was committed to making sure the public understood an important difference between two candidates for president of the United States.

The Peters court

I've been thinking about the kind of Supreme Court justice I would appoint—I have a weakness for fantasy—and I was surprised to realize that the first question I would ask him is: Can he figure out a constitutional way to get the money out of politics? The number one target should be the manufactured campaign commercial, which is where most of the money now goes.

My best guess as to an approach is to argue that the first amendment means what it says, that the speech that should be free is speech, words spoken by the candidate, not by professional actors and not involving artifice of any kind. The Constitution gives the individual the right to speak his mind, but not to have experts splice film and use sound effects to make him look better—or if he's the opponent, worse—than he really is. A law professor at the University of Chicago, Cass Sunstein, has developed a distinction between commercial and political speech that could be a starting point.

Anyway, what this reminds me of is that we liberals should be careful not to condemn judges just because they have a point of view. We want judges with a point of view—ours. Judges who will not only seek constitutional means of getting the money out of politics but also of protecting public health and safety and the environment and of fighting corrupt and unfair business practices and preserving our civil liberties.

There was something hideous about much of the criticism leveled at Harriet Miers. Her competence to be a judge was a legitimate target. But the concerns expressed about her hair, her clothes, and her makeup were embarrassingly absurd.

My next trip isn't until 2013 anyway

The FAA has finally decided to do something about those fuel tanks we were complaining about in the last issue. But you shouldn't stop worrying yet. The first half of the work will be finished in four years, reports *The Wall Street Journal*. And "the last of the safety enhancements" won't be fully in place until 2012. That is exactly 16 years after the fuel tank problem led to the crash of TWA Flight 800.

Out-of-state driver

Mystery of the month: Buried in a long *Washington Post* article about Mark Warner's recent visit to New Hampshire was a sentence saying he was being driven around the state by a Massachusetts state trooper. Can someone explain what a Massachusetts state trooper is doing driving the governor of Virginia around the state of New Hampshire?

In Harriet's defense

There was something hideous about much of the criticism leveled at Harriet Miers. Her competence to be a judge was, to be sure, a legitimate target. But the concerns expressed about her hair, clothes, and makeup by *The Washington Post*'s Robin Givhan were embarrassingly absurd. Even worse was the failure to find out what kind of human being she is, because we do want our judges to be good people. But this was an issue that only the *Post*'s Dale Russakoff and Marcia Davis attempted to explore. And what they found was a very good woman indeed—the kind of conservative Christian who not only talks the talk, but also walks the walk, performing laudable deeds of private charity.

Her concern for troubled clients is legendary in Dallas. Consider the case of one pro bono client, a nurse's aide named Caroline Ware. When Ware was wrongly arrested, "Miers came to a Dallas jail in the middle of the night to bail her out and get the charge dropped." Miers then paid $700 of her own money to keep Ware and her children from being evicted. When Ware was hospitalized, Miers hired a registered nurse. She also brought clothes and coats for the children at Christmas. I like that a lot.

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10 MILES SQUARE

New York, Paris, Milan . . . DC?

Two new magazines serve Washington's style-challenged wealthy.

By Zachary Roth

One Monday night in late November, I walked east from *The Washington Monthly* office to Oya, a swanky new French-Asian restaurant and lounge, featuring a glass-cased fireplace, luxurious leather banquettes, and a semi-transparent window-fountain separating the guests from the kitchen. This was the venue for a launch party for the Holiday issue of *Capitol File*, a glossy new luxury magazine targeted at D.C.'s affluent young mover-shakers—and those who aspire to the lifestyle. The event was being "hosted" by a supermodel and former Victoria's Secret pinup named Frederique van der Wal (also said to be the host of Travel Channel's "The Invisible Journey") and by someone named Billy Campbell, who was listed as the president of Discovery Channel's U.S. Networks.

In this crowd of dark-suited D.C. office workers, it wasn't hard to spot a supermodel—not least because a huge cardboard display, featuring a photograph of Frederique and the *Capitol File* logo, had been placed prominently at one end of the room. But no one seemed to know who Billy Campbell was. "That guy, maybe?" offered one guest, gesturing uncertainly at the well-dressed bouncer standing just inside the door.

That the celebrities were D-list said more about the city than the magazine. It's genuinely tough to attract bona fide boldface names to events like these in D.C., in part because most of the celebrities here are politicians, who fear that being photographed partying with supermodels at trendy French-Asian restaurants won't necessarily play well with the voters back home. Indeed, the city is so glamour-starved that the big news in *The Washington Post*'s gossip column recently was that Brad and Angelina were *not* moving to the district, after a photo of the couple outside an on-the-market Kalorama townhouse had sparked fevered and hopeful speculation on the blogs the previous day. Turned out they were just admiring the architecture.

All this has left the members of Washington's high-end-style conscious minority—who have grown used to laughing guiltily along when their New York friends call D.C., "Dull City"—feeling bereft. But *Capitol File*—along with a competitor, *Washington D.C. Style*, which launched earlier this year —is trying to change all that.

The inherent difficulty of the task can be seen in the fact that both magazines held their launch parties at Oya. D.C. may have plenty of expensive steakhouses, but the short list of truly cutting-edge venues is, well, short.

And there's a hint of hometown defensiveness inside the magazines themselves. The new issue of *Capitol File* blurbs photos of partygoers with the tired line about D.C. being "Hollywood for ugly people." "Not true!" the magazine adds indignantly.

Side by side, the magazines look pretty similar, but there are important differences. *D.C. Style* is "luxury," while *Capitol File* is "ultra-luxury," *D.C. Style* editor Sarah Schaffer told me.

So, what makes these magazines think they can sell the luxury —not to mention ultra-luxury—lifestyle to a city where even the interns wear

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black or grey business suits and carry briefcases? In recent years, thanks both to the northern Virginia tech boom, and to the doubling in size of D.C.'s lawyer-lobbying industry, the capital region has developed a burgeoning population of professionals earning Manhattan-like levels of income. That's reflected in the distribution plan for *Capitol File*—which, as part of Niche Media, owned by publishing mogul Jason Binn (né Binstock), has sister publications in New York, the Hamptons, Los Angeles, and Aspen. It's based on "controlled circulation," with most issues delivered to homes valued at $750,000 or more, and with incomes of over $250,000. It can also be found wherever else rich people gather: luxury hotels, high-end boutiques, and the New York-Washington shuttle.

As not-quite-invited guests in the homes of its readers, these magazines strive to be agreeable. *D.C. Style* has an editorial ban on saying anything critical—"we try to stay away from raking anyone over the coals because we're focused on highlighting what's great about the city," Schaffer told me. *Capitol File*'s hardest-hitting exposé involves Terry McAuliffe telling readers about the coolest new gadgets this season. Other noteworthy features include Paul Begala on his weekend place in Virginia, and John Podesta with 13 sentences on cooking polenta, given prominent cover billing.

But what *Capitol File* lacks in aggressive reporting, it more than makes up for in P.R. and marketing. The magazine hired Linda Roth Associates, a veteran D.C. publicity operation, to get itself noticed, and went with "Capitol" rather than the more logical "Capital"—it covers more than the capitol building, after all—after focus groups confirmed that the 'o' spelling more effectively

JARGON WATCH:

A dance craze is sweeping the nation's capital: the **kabuki dance**. In Japan, Kabuki is a traditional Japanese drama performed with highly stylized singing and dancing. Here in Washington, it's a metaphor, used to imply that a political event or situation is all show and no substance, or that everyone performs their parts while already knowing what the outcome will be. Other times, it's used to imply, well…we're not exactly sure what. But it's got a good beat, and politicians and pundits can dance to it.

—Sen. Joe Biden (D-Del.) at John Roberts's confirmation hearing: "It's kind of interesting, this **kabuki dance** we have in these hearings here, as if the public doesn't have a right to know what you think about fundamental issues facing them."

—Nina Totenberg (National Public Radio) on Lynddie England's military trial: "The guilty plea turned into a **kabuki dance** that even the judge couldn't buy."

—Mohamed Elbaradei (Director of the International Atomic Energy Agency) on nuclear disarmament talks: "It's absolutely ridiculous that we're spending 10 years doing **kabuki dance**—'Should we start the negotiations? Should we not start the negotiations?' For God's sake, let us start the negotiations.

—Sen. Jim Jeffords (I-Vt.) on funding for the Environmental Protection Agency: "I am tired of the **kabuki dance** the Administration and the Congress are playing with Lake Champlain."

—Wolf Blitzer (CNN) on the federal budget process: "This is almost like a **kabuki dance** they do every year. The president submits a budget. Congress then can do with that whatever it wants. It's a recommendation only. Congress can increase, decrease, leave it the same. Very often they simply ignore a lot of the president's recommendations and come up with their own plan."

—Mara Liasson (NPR): "The televised debates are one of the great set-piece battles of a presidential campaign and the maneuvering that precedes them is one of the great **kabuki dances** of presidential politics. Part of the dance is to inflate your opponent's expertise, to raise expectations for his performance and lower them for yours."

—Tom Brokaw on the 2004 campaign: Political "conventions have become **kabuki dances**."

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The Washington Monthly's

Monthly Journalism Award

John M.R. Bull

The Daily Press (Newport News, Va.)

October 30-31, 2005

Chemical and radioactive weapons dumped decades ago by the Army off the coast of several states potentially pose serious health risks to humans and the environment, and in a few rare cases have turned up on U.S. soil. Yet, despite being aware of the dangers, the Army has done virtually nothing to address the problem, according to an investigation by the *Daily Press* of Newport News, Va. None of the 26 dump zones have been examined in the past 30 years, only one dump site has been put on nautical charts to warn boaters, divers and fishermen, and state officials have been kept in the dark. Now canisters are beginning to wash up on beaches, and environmental groups are raising an alarm.

The Monthly Journalism Award is presented each month to one or more newspaper, magazine, radio, or television stories (or series of stories) that demonstrate a commitment to the public interest. We are particularly interested in reporting that explains the successes and failures of government agencies at all levels and of other institutions such as the media, corporations, unions, and foundations that contribute to the existence or solution of public problems. We welcome your nominations. Or email us at editors@washingtonmonthly.com.

conveyed Washington's distinct identity as the seat of government.

There's no doubt the magazine's staff is having a good time. "Part of it is complete fun," conceded editor in chief Kate Gibbs, as we squeeze against the wall at Oya to avoid the incoming throngs. "But you've got to have the substance," she added, referring, presumably, to the piece in which Ali Wentworth (Mrs. George Stephanopoulos) describes spending Christmas at the beach in L.A., or perhaps to the one where "consummate hostess Jaci Reid shares the tricks of the trade," (sample tip: "An eclectic group of sexy, good-looking extroverts ensures animated conversation.") Gibbs's eyes were darting wildly around the room, and her mouthed 'Hi's' over my shoulder seemed to be increasing in frequency ("you are looking hot," she told publisher Paige Bishop as she walked by) so I wandered off for another Stoli on the rocks. A staffer assigned to greet guests at the door echoed her boss' enthusiasm: "Love it. Everyone's so cool."

And the guests, too—many of whom appeared to be advertisers (or potential advertisers) the magazine was trying to court—seemed impressed, though perhaps the bar was low. "This is exactly what D.C. needs," said a man who owned a "very high-end" jewelry shop in Virginia. A small, intense woman enthused, "Jason Binn is a marketing genius. *Capitol File* is the magazine to watch," then offered a confident prediction: "*D.C. Style* will be out of business in a year." The woman denied being paid to promote *Capitol File*, but conceded that she did work in P.R., and named the Chevy Chase Cosmetics Center as a client. Just keeping her skills up, apparently. In the women's bathroom (don't ask), one partygoer announced that her husband was a sous-chef at Maestro, a fancy Italian place in Tysons Corner, Va. "Ooh," gushed another, impressed beyond measure. "You never know who you're going to meet here."

Over near the bar, a stylish twenty-something was grappling with the dilemmas of modern living: "I usually always wear studs, but I was like, should I wear *these* to work?" she told a companion, pointing to the silver pendant earrings dangling from her ears. Nearby, three good-looking gay guys stood in a circle. One leafed through a copy of the magazine—it was hard to move without tripping on one—to show his friends a picture of himself, taken at a previous *Capitol File* event much like this one, except that, according to one, "the waiters' asses were better."

Still, there was a sense of mild disappointment, faintly detectable under the composed party-smiles of the magazine's staff, that no one more interesting had turned up. A Washington gossip columnist complained that the pickings had been slim, news-wise. But suddenly—salvation! A frisson of excitement rippled across the room as in walked Jessica Cutler, aka The Washingtonienne. As a junior Senate staffer in the spring of 2004, Cutler briefly gained local fame for turning tricks for high-ranking government officials on her lunch break. She writes a column for the magazine—her Holiday-issue effort begins, "If I don't get a Cartier "Love" bracelet from my boyfriend this Christmas, it's over," —and her presence seemed to provide affirmation that in spite of everything, there was glamour, of a kind, to be found in Washington. Hey, who knows? Maybe this is all gonna work out fine.

Zachary Roth is an editor of *The Washington Monthly.*

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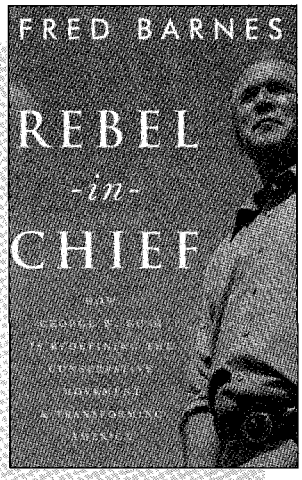
FRED BARNES, SYCOPHANT-IN-CHIEF



When it comes to supporting President Bush, few people exhibit the stalwartness of Fred Barnes, a *Weekly Standard* editor and Fox News pundit. Now the most pro-Bush journalist in America has a forthcoming book about his hero, *Rebel-in-Chief: The Bold and Controversial presidency of George W. Bush*. We here at *The Washington Monthly* thought that our readers deserved a sneak-peek.

Getting to the Bottom of Issues

—"In policy discussions, Bush often poses fundamental questions. He once asked what the function of the Defense Department was."

A Remarkable Response to Hurricane Katrina

—"President Bush revealed his proactive tendencies after Hurricane Katrina devastated New Orleans and coastal Mississippi in the late summer of 2005."

— "Bush was so fixated on the devastation and suffering in the region that he failed to sense a conservative backlash."

Leadership, the Decorating Kind

—"[Bush's] job, he told me, is to 'stay out of the minutiae, keep the big picture in mind, but also make sure that I know enough about what's going on to get the best information possible.' To stress the point, during our interview in the Oval Office Bush called my attention to the rug; he had been surprised, he said, to learn that the first decision a president is expected to make is what color the rug should be. 'I wasn't aware that presidents were rug designers,' he told me. So he delegated the task, to Laura. Typical of his governing style, though, he gave a clear principle as guidance: he wanted the rug to express the view that an 'optimistic person comes here.' The rug she designed is sunrise yellow."

—"Bush is a big picture person, eager to concentrate on major issues and delegate smaller ones. That explains why he let Laura design the oval office rug."

Not an Ordinary Man

—"When I went to interview President Bush just before his August vacation in 2005, he was waiting for me. I'd gotten a call at my office to the effect that Bush was running ahead of schedule. This was uncharacteristic of a president, indeed of politicians in general. But for Bush it is common; operating efficiently is a source of pride and a distinguishing mark of his presidency. The president was standing in the Oval Office, unperturbed but ready for the interview."

—"When he was practicing a State of the Union address, the operators of the TelePrompTer couldn't get the machine to function properly. Bush snapped at them. 'I'll come back when you get it right,' he said. Bush returned ten minutes later and apologized to everyone, especially the TelePrompTer operators. He said a president shouldn't act that way. Presidents don't ordinarily apologize. Bush's apology was an expression of his Christian faith."

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Let There Be Wi-Fi

Broadband is the electricity of the 21st century —and much of America is being left in the dark.

By Robert W. McChesney and John Podesta

Two decades ago, the chattering classes fretted about economic upheaval rising from Japan and the Asian Tigers. They feared an invasion of cars, microchips, and Karaoke that would take away American jobs, take over U.S.-dominated industries, and shift cultural norms. In the 1990s, America responded with a boom in high technology and Hollywood exports. But a revolution is again brewing in places like Japan and South Korea. This time it's about "broadband"—a technology that, in terms of powering economies, could be the 21st century equivalent of electricity. But rather than relive the jingoism of the 1980s, American policy makers would be wise to take a cue from the Asian innovators and implement new policies to close the digital divide at home and with the rest of the world.

Most people know broadband as an alternative to their old, slow dial-up Internet connection. These high-capacity data networks made of fiber-optic cables provide a constant, unbroken connection to the Internet. But broadband is about much more than checking your email or browsing on EBay. In the near future, telephone, television, radio and the web all will be delivered to your home via a single broadband connection. In the not-so-distant-future, broadband will be an indispensable part of economic, personal, and public life. Those countries that achieve universal broadband are going to hold significant advantages over those who don't. And so far, the United States is poised to be a follower—not a leader—in the broadband economy.

Robert W. McChesney is the founder and president of Free Press, a media-reform organization, and an award-winning author of eight books on media-reform issues. **John Podesta** is the president and CEO of the Center for American Progress, and former Chief of Staff to President William J. Clinton.

American residents and businesses now pay two to three times as much for slower and poorer quality service than countries like South Korea or Japan. Since 2001, according to the International Telecommunications Union, the United States has fallen from fourth to 16th in the world in broadband penetration. Thomas Bleha recently argued in *Foreign Affairs* that what passes for broadband in the United States is "the slowest, most expensive and least reliable in the developed world." While about 60 percent of U.S. households do not subscribe to broadband because it is either unavailable where they live or they cannot afford it, most Japanese citizens can access a high-speed connection that's more than 10 times faster than what's available here for just $22 a month. (Japan is now rolling out ultra-high speed access at more than 500 times what the Federal Communications Commission considers to be "broadband" in this country.)

The economic ramifications are profound. "Asians will have the first crack at developing the new commercial applications, products, services, and content of the high-speed-broadband era," writes Bleha. Already, South Korea, which leads the world in the percentage of its businesses and homes with broadband, is the number one developer of online video games—perhaps the fastest-growing industry today. What's more, societies in which broadband use is near-universal will adapt to its uses much more quickly than those where access is available only to the well-to-do few.

The countries surpassing the United States in broadband deployment did so by using a combination of public entities and private firms. The Japanese built their world-class system by ensuring "open access" to residential telephone lines, meaning competitors paid the same wholesale price to use the wires. The country is also establishing a super-fast, nationwide fiber system via a

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FDR called municipal power systems "a birch rod in the cupboard" to threaten big utilities into action. Municipal WiFi systems can similarly motivate today's telecom monopolies.

combination of tax breaks, debt guarantees and subsidies. But of particular note, the Japanese government also encouraged municipalities to build their own networks, especially in rural areas. Towns and villages willing to set up their own ultra-high-speed fiber networks received government subsidies covering approximately one-third of their costs.

Unfortunately, the United States has pursued the opposite policy. President Bush has called for "universal, affordable access for broadband technology by the year 2007," and FCC Chairman Kevin Martin claims broadband deployment is his "highest priority." But they have made no progress toward these goals; in fact, they have rewarded their corporate cronies for maintaining high prices, low speeds and lackluster innovation. Federal policies have not merely failed to correct our broadband problems, they have made them worse. Instead of encouraging competition, the FCC has allowed DSL providers and cable companies to shut out competitors by denying access to their lines. And whereas the Japanese government encourages individual towns to set up their own "Community Internet," Washington has done nothing. Fourteen states in the United States now have laws on the books restricting cities and towns from building their own high-speed Internet networks. No wonder America is falling behind its Asian competitors.

Despite all the opposition from telecom companies and their political allies, some municipalities are finding ways to provide broadband to their residents. Community Internet projects are already up and running in dozens of small towns and coming soon to bigger cities like Philadelphia, Portland, and Minneapolis. These cities recognize broadband as perhaps the single most important factor in transforming their local economies and the lives of average citizens. Community Internet could revolutionize and democratize communications in this country. But the major obstacle to universal, affordable broadband access for all Americans is not economic or technical. It's political.

"A birch rod in the cupboard"

The dispute over municipal broadband bears a striking similarity to the development of the electric power industry a century ago. As James Baller—an attorney who represents local governments and public utilities—first warned in a 1994 paper written for the American Public Power Association: "The history of the electric power industry casts substantial doubt on the notion that our nation can depend on competition among cable and telephone companies alone...to ensure not only prompt and affordable, but also universal, access to the benefits of the information superhighway."

Borrowing from Richard Rudolph and Scott Ridley's 1986 book, *Power Struggle: The Hundred-Year War Over Electricity*, Baller showed that when electricity first became available in the 1880s, privately owned utilities marketed "the new technology as synonymous with wealth, power and privilege," lighting large cities, businesses, and the homes of the rich. Electricity also allowed factories to stay open 24 hours a day, and led to the institution of swing shifts. But communities that didn't have electricity couldn't produce as much, and couldn't keep up with urban competitors. Rural communities were left with the choice of forming a government-owned utility or being left in the dark. Even big cities like Detroit built municipal power systems to cut prices and extend service. In response, private utility companies responded with a massive propaganda and misinformation campaign that attacked advocates of municipal power as "un-American," "Bolshevik," and "an unholy alliance of radicals."

But the expansion of electricity, Baller argued, showed that the presence—or even threat—of competition from the public sector is one of the surest ways to secure quality service and reasonable prices from private enterprises delivering critical public services. FDR, he notes, called municipal power systems "a birch rod in the cupboard, to be taken out and used only when the child gets beyond the point where more scolding does any good."

And Roosevelt picked up the birch rod himself. In 1935, he created the Rural Electrification Administration (REA), which gave loans and other help to small towns and farmer cooperatives interested in setting up their own power systems. The REA turned out to be one of the New Deal's most successful programs. Within two years, hundreds of new municipal power utilities were up and running across the country, and within 20 years, virtually all of rural America had electricity, provided either by rural co-ops or big utilities spurred to action by municipal competition. Baller concluded: "The plain, hard truth is that universal electric service would never have developed on a timely

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basis in the absence of municipally owned electric utilities and rural electric cooperatives"—which still account for more than a quarter of the power in the country today.

Like the advent of electricity, broadband is transforming the daily lives of Americans. The future of U.S. communities depends upon access to advanced high-speed telecommunications services, a fact many urban policymakers already recognize. "Just as with the roads of old," Dianah Neff, Philadelphia's chief information technology officer, recently told *BusinessWeek*, "if broadband bypasses you, you become a ghost town."

The Philadelphia story

Last year, sensing their citizens were being stranded on the wrong side of the digital divide, Philadelphia's leaders launched an ambitious plan to blanket the entire city with wireless Internet service. To provide universal, affordable Internet access, Philadelphia plans to construct a gigantic "wireless mesh network"—a system of interconnected antennas placed on streetlights, traffic signals, and public buildings. Each of these "nodes" broadcasts a broadband signal, which connects up with other nodes to create a cloud of Internet access for PCs, laptops and wireless devices. The technology is similar to the "Wi-Fi hotspots" that have popped up at cafes and libraries across the country. Philadelphia's hotspot, however, will cover 135 square miles.

No tax dollars will be used to build the system, which will be financed instead with $10 to $15 million in bonds and private investment. The city is finalizing a contract with a consortium led by Earthlink to build and run the system—and several Internet service providers (ISPs) will compete to market the service to local residents. The service will cost about $20 a month —with subsidized access for lower-income households for about $10. The city plans to deploy the first of 3,000 nodes soon and complete the system by 2007.

For all its potential benefits to the city's residents, Wireless Philadelphia was nearly crushed before it started. Last fall, behind closed doors in the state capitol, industry lobbyists slipped a measure into a massive telecommunications bill to stop municipalities from entering the broadband business. "The Verizon bill"—as it was known around the state legislature—sailed through both chambers before city officials and media advocates got wind of its contents. A last-minute compromise carved an exception for Philadelphia, allowing that effort to go ahead as planned, but the rest of the state was shut out.

Towns in states where industry lobbyists have not succeeded (yet) in shutting down municipal broadband are doing remarkable things. When three major employers in Scottsburg, Ind. (pop. 6,040), threatened to leave town because they didn't have the communications infrastructure needed to deal with their customers and suppliers, the town's mayor, Bill Graham, went to the major cable and telephone companies for help. They told him that extending high-speed broadband services to Scottsburg wasn't profitable enough. So the city decided to build a municipal wireless "cloud" using transmitters placed on water and electric towers that reach more than 90 percent of the surrounding county's 23,000 residents. "Scottsburg didn't wake up one morning and say, we want to be in the broadband business," Graham told PBS. "Scottsburg had business and industry that was going to leave our community because what we had was not fast enough." Scottsburg's investment worked—the employers stayed.

In Hermiston, Ore., fire fighters and police officers carry wireless computers that can download blueprints of a building on the way to a fire or track an accident at the nearby Army depot that houses chemical weapons, thanks to that town's Community Internet system. And Community Internet even played a role in helping the evacuees from Hurricane Katrina. With much of the communications network obliterated in the Gulf Coast Region, a cadre of volunteers converged in Louisiana, and used donated equipment to set up wireless networks, computers and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phones at more than a dozen shelters, allowing evacuees to contact other shelters to search for family members or fill out FEMA forms to get disaster aid.

The industry backlash

Community Internet has the potential to revolutionize and democratize communications in this country. And that may be the reason why big cable and telephone companies and their political allies have launched a sophisticated misinformation campaign. These companies and their coin-operated think tanks generally make three paradoxical arguments against municipal broadband. First, they contend that municipalities have no place in the "free market." Of course, the cable and telephone giants don't mention that their own monopolies—which control 98 percent of the broadband market—have been cemented with extensive public subsidies, tax breaks and incentives (as well as free rein to tear up city streets). Verizon, for instance, didn't complain last fall when Pennsylvania handed them subsidies for broadband deployment worth nearly 10 times what Wireless Philadelphia will cost. Neither did Comcast object when Philadelphia approved a $30 million grant to build a skyscraper that will house its headquarters. To the incumbent providers, "unfair competition" means any competition at all.

Opponents also warn that municipalities will "crowd out" more efficient private players. In reality, most municipal networks are a last resort by desperate local governments. Often their choice isn't between a municipal system and a private one, but between municipal and nothing. (Of course, that doesn't stop the phone and cable companies from trying to outlaw Community Internet even in areas where they don't currently offer service.) A recent study by the Florida Municipal Electric Association found "no evidence" to support the argument that municipal systems limit private investment. On the con-

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A 2001 Brookings Institution study estimated the widespread adoption of basic broadband could add $500 billion to the U.S. economy and create 1.2 million new jobs per year.

trary, these systems appear to spur investment by bringing entrepreneurs and new competition into the market. Even threatening to build a system has a funny way of encouraging the incumbents to improve service and lower their prices.

The same critics of Community Internet claim that cities are too "lazy" or inefficient to manage complex systems and will be unable to adapt to changing technologies. But municipalities have a long track record of successfully and efficiently operating power plants, sewage systems and subways. It's hard to imagine that the broadband networks—most of which will actually be operated by private contractors—are any more complex. Perhaps the more obvious question is: If these systems are destined to fail, why are the telephone and cable companies expending so much energy trying to stop them?

The high-priced industry lobbyists and their political allies are moving quickly to write their monopolies into law. In 2005, they were able to push through restrictions in five states—though only Nebraska passed an outright ban. But eight other bills were defeated or derailed thanks to a vocal coalition of media reformers, consumer groups, municipal officials, and the high-tech industry. So now opponents are pushing legislation at the federal level to outlaw municipal broadband nationwide. Rep. Pete Sessions (R-Texas), a former executive at phone giant SBC, has introduced a bill in the House that would give incumbent providers the right of first refusal before a city or town could offer broadband service. A similar measure is buried in Sen. John Ensign's (R-Nev.) rewrite of the Telecom Act.

21st-century meal ticket

This is exactly the opposite of what the country needs. Instead, we need political leadership to build popular support for a new national broadband policy. To start, the FCC should swiftly reverse course and restore competition for broadband whether it comes from DSL, cable, power lines, or wireless Community Internet systems.

Congress could boost the speed and reliability of community wireless networks by making available more "unlicensed spectrum"—those portions of the public airwaves not exclusively reserved for government or commercial use. Exisiting "Wi-Fi" networks operate in "junk bands" cluttered with signals from cordless phones, microwave ovens , baby monitors and other consumer devices. At lower frequencies–like in the television band—signals travel farther and can go through walls, trees and mountains. Opening up some of this spectrum would make Community Internet systems much faster and cheaper to deploy, allowing a new generation of broadband entrepreneurs to enter the market. The broadcasters are about to return a sizable chunk of spectrum as part of the digital television transition, a portion of which could be reserved for Community Internet if Congress doesn't auction it all off to the cell phone companies. Another option would be to reallocate vast, unused "white spaces" between TV channels for wireless broadband. Either way, more "unlicensed spectrum" is the key to making universal, super-fast broadband for $10 a month a reality.

Most importantly, the federal government must ensure that the cable and telephone monopolies can't crush innovative projects like Wireless Philadelphia and the emerging national movement for Community Internet. Sens. John McCain (R-Ariz.) and Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) have introduced a bill that would free municipalities to decide for themselves which technologies best serve their citizens. U.S. policy should create incentives for communities to build advanced telecommunications networks in hundreds of cities and towns across the country, creating robust competition for communications services, assisting small entrepreneurs through public-private partnerships, and bringing opportunity to low-income urban neighborhoods and rural communities too often neglected by large entrenched monopolies.

Without real competition or innovation, broadband deployment in the United States has stagnated. And the stakes of this misguided policy couldn't be higher. According to the Department of Commerce, 95 percent of new jobs created will demand computer skills. And a 2001 Brookings Institution study estimated the widespread adoption of basic broadband could add $500 billion to the U.S. economy and create 1.2 million new jobs per year. Simply empowering local governments and community groups, in coordination with private entrepreneurs, to provide universal affordable, broadband may be the single best thing we can do to make America the pre-eminent economy—and democracy—of the 21st century. ◆

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Kos Call

For America's number one liberal blogger, politics is like sports: It's all about winning.

By Benjamin Wallace-Wells

"I *hate* Washington," says Markos Moulitsas Zuniga. Many people, of course, say that they hate Washington. Jay Leno says so. So do Rush Limbaugh and Monica Lewinsky. But Moulitsas, who is the world's biggest political blogger, says it differently, with a freshly arrived-at and deeply felt zeal, as if he himself has discovered the place and its pathologies anew. When Moulitsas says Washington he's not talking about Bush's Washington, with it's pitched partisan camps and and pay-to-play ethos. He's talking about Democratic Washington: the liberal Ivy League mandarins, consultants, and wonks, many of them refugees from the Clinton administration, insiders whom he believes have run the Democratic Party and the progressive movement into the ground, by valuing compromise over confrontation. To him, it's not that these people have the wrong values, or priorities. It's that they are failures. Moulitsas's career to this point has been a bet that enough other people share this very precise, nearly sub-articulate animus. *I hate Washington.*

And yet there he was, just after the 2004 elections, in the ornate Lyndon B. Johnson room of the capitol, where he'd been invited to give Senate Democrats a post mortem on what went wrong. The party had just lost its third election in a row, and his audience, a self-flagellatory group at the best of times, was feeling glum and a little bit desperate. Moulitsas told the assembled crowd that they, the establishment, had mismanaged party strategy for too long and that he, Markos, had a better plan. He can be so intense and high-strung, so full of kinetic energy, that the sheer performance of his speeches—he never writes them out, just talks off-the-cuff—can be distracting, like watching snakes fighting in a bag. As he held forth, urging Democrats to rely upon technology and embrace partisanship and confrontation, Moulitsas's audience was one-part bewildered, one-part overwhelmed, and maybe a little inspired. "I'm not sure everyone really knew what to think," one Senate aide told me.

Moulitsas's appearance before the Democratic caucus was a verbal version of what he writes every day on his blog, DailyKos. The site, which has existed for only around three and a half years, now has 3.7 million readers each week. That's more than the top 10 opinion magazines —of both left and right—combined, more readers than any political publication has had, ever, in the history of the world. In addition, Moulitsas used the site to raise $500,000 for Democratic candidates in the last election cycle – making him one of the party's top fund-raisers. And, thanks to his early and enthusiastic backing of Howard Dean's campaign for the party's presidential nomination, Moulitsas became perhaps the key player in Dean's Internet-based rise to prominence.

This record, combined with the sheer vigor and clarity of his online manifestoes, has brought Moulitsas, a 34-year-old Californian whom nobody had heard of until three years ago, to the attention of the Democratic establishment, first as a resented adversary and now, increasingly, a kind of part-time sage, an affiliate member. Every third week, Moulitsas has a standing phone call with congressional powerbroker Rep. Rahm Emmanuel (D-Ill.) and he talks regularly with Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.). In part, this is raw flattery, a way for Democratic politicians to keep a particularly shrill irritant off their own backs while simultaneously reaching out to his audience, the party's young, liberal, professional grassroots. But it's not just an empty gesture. Moulitsas has become so well incorporated into the party machinery that the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) uses him to recruit candidates. "They get calls from, like John Edwards, and maybe Tom Vilsack, and then, always, Markos," one DCCC staffer told me. This legacy has made him the current champion of that wing of Democratic party—anti-war, deeply partisan, young, mostly white, and professional—that seemed ascendent in the year before the first Democratic primaries in 2004. Deanism, in Moulitsas' hands, in an unending belief in the triumphal capacities of the right kind of theatrics, the importance not just of saying the right things, but of saying them with an uncompromising zeal, and gut, and feeling.

This kind of access would not have been possible in a different political moment. But long, uninterrupted strings of losses tend to break down the old hierarchies and democratize things. The Myth of Karl Rove, which looms over American politics, and the conviction that the party's wins or losses are a matter of tactics, not substance, has left the Democrats looking for their own master tactician. And some in the party seem to want to see Moulitsas in that role.

The conventional wisdom is that a Democratic party in which Moulitsas calls the shots would cater to every whim of its liberal base. But though he can match Michael Moore for shrillness, the most salient thing about Moulitsas' politics is

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Moulitsas is correct that in many cases, Democrats have lost the urge to do what it takes to win. But wanting very badly to win is not a political philosophy.

not where he falls on the left-right spectrum (he's actually not very far left). It's his relentless competitiveness, founded not on any particular set of political principles, but on an obsession with tactics — and in particular, with the tactics of a besieged minority, struggling for survival: stand up for your principles, stay united, and never back down from a fight. "They want to make me into the latest Jesse Jackson, but I'm not ideological at all," Moulitsas told me, "I'm just all about winning."

Some influential Democrats believe this new mindset has been largely responsible for many of the party's recent successes in Washington – fighting off the White House's Social Security privatization plan, closing down the Senate to force an investigation into pre-war intelligence, and defeating an attempt by the White House to suspend labor laws in the rebuilding of the Gulf Coast. "These Democratic insiders believe that Moulitsas and his website, who helped egg the party on in this toughened moment, might be transformative, and they want to place a gaudy bet on him.

They also believe, even more strongly, that Moulitsas is transformative, that he contains the trigger for a new political epoch. The DCCC's executive director, John Lapp, says that Moulitsas's model is "a signal event in political history, like the Kennedy-Nixon debates, in how it gets people involved." And Simon Rosenberg, the president of the centrist New Democratic Network (NDN), says that "frankly I don't think there's anyone who's had the potential to revolutionize the Democratic party that Markos does." This great faith has put Moulitsas—an extremely smart, irascible, self-contradictory, often petty, always difficult, non-practicing attorney and web programmer with no real political experience—in the position of trying to understand, on the fly, what real power is and how it might be exercised, thrust him into a flailing, wild-eyed and bold solitary venture, trying to turn a website into a movement.

To the Berkeley hills

"Everybody says I'm an asshole, and they're right, I am," Moulitsas says. We are walking around his Berkeley neighborhood, and his stride is as purposeful as his conversation; I've probably got eight inches on him, and I've got to hustle to keep up. Talking with Moulitsas, like reading his blog, is a singularly withering experience. He speaks in twenty-minute chunks, so you don't need to ask questions so much as provision buckets to catch the flood. When I nodded to agree with a point he made, he looked mildly disappointed; his conversation tends to circle back over itself, probing, seeking resistance. Moulitsas is not a naturally commanding presence—he's 5'6, slender, with a high-pitched voice and a rounded face that puts you vaguely in mind of an animated frog. Neither is he a naturally social person: He will never move to Washington, he told me, in part because he's suspicious of the "cocktail party circuit." And when the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee threw a party for him and some other bloggers at last year's Boston convention, he arrived, immediately picked a loud, disruptive fight with the organization's executive director, Jim Bonham, and stormed out. Midway through our conversation in Berkeley, I suddenly realized a tick of his: He never blinks.

Moulitsas' neighborhood, a few dozen square blocks bor-

Art by Fred Harper

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dering Oakland, is not the Eloii-inscribed Berkeley of fantasy—cappuccino, sexy radicals, a sustaining belief in the martyrdom of Leonard Peltier. It is, instead, the kind of working-class neighborhood where the Department of Public Health posts billboard ads about the dangers of syphilis in three languages simultaneously. When Moulitsas moved here a few years ago, there were four crack houses on his block. "And I still rent," he says, in a tone somewhere between resignation and despair. He lives in a three-room house, with a flowering, taller-than-a-man pink bush by the front door, which you can see from down the street – it looks from the corner like a huge splash of paint on a drab block. Inside is his office. . .well, it's not an office, really, just a power cord he plugs into his laptop, now at his desk, now at the coffee table. Moulitsas lives here with his wife, a reporter from Wired News, and his two-year old son Ari, whose toys are scattered around the yard and the living room.

Moulitsas' single, unalloyed fantasy is the classic dream of the newly-come westerner—to buy a plot of land up in the Berkeley hills on which to build, to begin. But the plots are expensive and going fast. The income Moulitsas has generated from advertisers on Daily Kos isn't enough for even this modest, middle-class dream; to get there more quickly, he's banking on a book due out next spring, which will distill what you get on his blog—vituperative attacks on the Bush administration, Democratic insiders, and the media. To build his house, then, Moulitsas has made a smaller version of the bet the Democratic establishment is making on him: that his philosophy is something coherent and salable in his own right, and not just the thing his readers tolerate because he's got a cool website.

And if the book's not enough, there are the sports blogs. A company Moulitsas started last year operates blogs written by and for fans of each of about a dozen baseball teams (there's Amazin' Avenue for the Mets, Athletics Nation for the A's) in which fans rip the talent just like on sports radio—the players are wimps, the coach is an idiot, I could do better. (One of the sports bloggers Moulitsas has on salary compared his role to Stadler and Waldorf, the stuffed, bomb-throwing theater critics from the Muppet Show). It's hard not to be struck by the similarity —in tone, and rhetoric— between these blogs and Daily Kos. Moulitsas himself has noticed the parallel. "If I'm not thinking about politics, I'm thinking about sports," he once told *Wired* magazine. "I've realized blogs are most effective when talking to partisan audiences. What we have in the sports world, like in the political world, is people want to be heard, they want to give their opinion."

Stepping over bodies

Moulitsas was born in Chicago, to a middle class, ethnically Greek family from El Salvador (his uncle, an architect, had briefly been that country's education minister). The family moved back to El Salvador when Moulitsas was four, and was on the right-wing side of the Cold War proxy fight there. But as that war's intrusions became unbearable—Moulitsas talks about stepping over dead bodies—the family returned to Chicago, where he grew up, in his own words, "a loud-mouthed nerd."

After high school, Moulitsas, then a Reagan Republican thanks largely to the White House's support of the Salvadorean government, spent four years as an army artillery scout, mainly in Germany. He had begun to gravitate leftwards while in the military—its diversity had incubated in him a kind of nascent identity politics liberalism—and when he was discharged and enrolled at Northern Illinois University, he became active in campus politics, writing a column for the school paper and helping to lead the college's Hispanic student group. After he graduated, he took another degree, from Boston University's law school, and then, in 1998, moved out to San Francisco to try his luck in Silicon Valley.

A couple of years later, now married, he moved again, to Berkeley, exasperated at the realization that he wasn't going to make a fortune in the high tech boom. "Maybe at some time Silicon Valley really was this democratic ideal where the guy with the best idea made a billion dollars, but by the time I got there at least, it was just like anything else, a bunch of rich kids who knew each other running around and it all depended on who you knew," Moulitsas told me. Unemployed, Moulitsas, started posting comments on a site called MyDD.com, the most insidery of the emerging liberal blogs. During late 2001 and early 2002, he developed a following, for the strength and clarity of his denunciations of the Bush administration. Moulitsas started his own blog, and, in the summer of 2002, Daily Kos opened for business.

In November 2002, the Democrats lost seats in the midterm elections. Moulitsas had confidently predicted a big win, but in the aftermath of the disappointment, he became convinced that he understood the key to the party's electoral failure. Republicans, he believed, had a "noise machine," – a coalition of coordinated advocacy and opinion media outlets that pressured the mainstream media into reporting, and repeating, GOP-friendly spin. "The simplest fact about American politics," he told me, "is that Republicans have a noise machine and we don't." Daily Kos, he decided, would become the Democratic noise machine, pressing the case against the Bush administration and the Iraq war in the strongest terms possible. Moulitsas's posts are not long or involved—and he clearly has no literary pretensions—but they are clear and consistent. Some news of the day has reinforced either the corruption and evil of Republicans, the gullible incomprehension of the media, or the timidity and incoherence of the Democrats. The site is for the true believers, not the aesthetes; its tone is harsh, impassioned and frequently humorless.

And sometimes infantile and absurd. The site in recent months has become to seem like the site of some arcane political Thermidor, with puzzled liberals being endlessly impaled upon pikes.In June, 2003, after television cameras caught a cheering, thousand-strong mob in Fallujah dragging the charred, dismembered bodies of American contractors through the streets, Moulitsas linked to the reports and said of the contractors: "I feel nothing. . .Screw them." The declaration, gleefully seized on by right-wing bloggers, provoked weeks of controversy. Democratic candidates came under

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pressure to pull their advertisements from the site, and even Moulitsas' traditional allies in the liberal blogosphere—including *The Washington Monthly*'s Kevin Drum—criticized him. (When I asked Moulitsas recently how he felt about the episode, his mouth stretched into a smile: "Vindicated," he said. The media has recently begun to question the role of American contractors in Iraq, he pointed out, which was the point all along. This is how a liberal noise machine, freed from the don't-shatter-the-porcelain decorum, might work.)

If the episode hurt him, it wasn't evident from his readership numbers, which continued to sky-rocket. ("It was a blip!" he crowed to *The New York Times*). This was in part because Moulitsas, applying the innovation he'd learnt from MyDD, was giving readers information that had previously been the exclusive province of insiders. He pored over polls and fundraising stats for hundreds of Congressional races around the country—a task made possible by the Internet, where local newspaper polls and reports were available for free—which he linked to on his site.

For decades, there's been a certain knowing, insider language that operatives and journalists in Washington have shared, an understanding of where parties are putting their resources, of who is really ahead in the polls, of whose ground game is stronger, that always gave them a special authority, and an ability to claim to understand the political landscape long before Election Day. Now, thanks to Daily Kos and similar sites, everyone has access to the same basic information, and the privileged insider status of the political professionals counts for much less.

This was the political equivalent of what baseball statistics maven Bill James did in the late 1970's when he published his first Baseball Abstract, giving ordinary fans the tools they needed to knowledgeably second-guess the tactics of the coaches, and to argue that they would run things differently. And because the Daily Kos allowed readers to comment, it went even further than James could, aping sports talk radio by letting political junkies hash out tactics together and argue with each other.

Being able to argue about politics online was exciting, but a website with a comments function is hardly unusual. In October of 2003, though, Moulitsas transferred his site over to a technology called Scoop, which allowed registered readers to maintain diaries—their own unique weblogs. Suddenly, Moulitsas had transformed his site from something that looked kind of like a newspaper column into a genuinely new, complex community filled not with readers but with writers. "Scoop has the potential to revolutionize political participation," the NDN's Rosenberg told me. "The old model was that you used your body to take part in the political process—you drove voters to the polls, registered them. Markos' model is: You use your mind. You get to figure out what the party ought to be doing, you get to figure out what's wrong with the Bush administration, you get to be the intellectual. It's an infinitely more involving activity." Soon, Moulitsas's site had spawned eponymous new stars, well-read diarists who carried Moulitsas's crusades forward when he was otherwise engaged or asleep: Billmon, DavidNYC, Bill in Portland Maine. If they were good—or outrageous—enough, he promoted them to the main site, allowing them to share space with him and exposing them to an audience that was growing by the tens of thousands.

There was another reason, though, why hundreds of thousands of liberals around the country found themselves addictively checking and re-checking Daily Kos as the 2004 election approached. It made them think Democrats were going to win. Moulitsas wasn't just posting any polls, he was selecting those that suggested Democrats—from John Kerry to congressional candidates—were heading for victory, while downplaying less encouraging signs. It left liberals trapped in a bubble of reassurance. Heading into the election, it would have been reasonable to assume from the evidence presented on Daily Kos that Kerry was the clear favorite to beat Bush, and that Democrats were likely to pick up seats in both houses of Congress. When none of these things happened, there was a sense of incomprehension. All of Kos' confident predictions had been wrong. "It's a valid criticism. Looking back, I was too optimistic," Moulitsas told me. "[At] the beginning, I didn't even know what a margin of error was."

Worse, Kos hadn't just fared poorly as an armchair quarterback—he'd been beaten on the field too. In the Democratic primaries, he first backed Dean, then Wesley Clark. Both sparked grassroots excitement, but ultimately, of course, flamed out. Then, of the 13 Democratic candidates for Congress that Moulitsas handpicked for his readers to support—and for whom he raised over $500,000– not a single one prevailed.

The ideology of winnerism

Many expected Moulitsas' readership to shrivel after the election. Instead, it has nearly doubled; so, it often seems, has his influence. In the spring, readers on his blog began to champion the candidacy of Paul Hackett, a retired Iraq Marine colonel running for Congress in Ohio. Hackett had returned from the war to oppose it, and the site's readers, who loved the pure theatrics of a strapping guy in uniform who took their side, helped turn him into a national figure. He went on to lose, but he did well enough in a deep-red district that he's now running for Senate from Ohio. In August, the site's constant shilling of Cindy Sheehan, whose soldier son had died in Iraq and who set up an anti-war camp outside of the President's Crawford ranch, helped keep that story in the news for the whole month.

Sometimes, Moulitsas has used his noise machine boldly and well, shaking up the party and the broader movement in useful ways. He went after the Democratic consultant hierarchy for its refusal to innovate, and the party establishment for providing a "gravy train" for consultants who keep losing races. He attacked NARAL after the abortion rights organization endorsed pro-choice Republican senator Lincoln Chafee (R-RI) over his predicted challenger, a pro-life Democrat. He has also argued, along with others, that to win back red states, Democrats should avoid talking about gun-control—advice the party has largely taken, with some initial suc-

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cess.

But it's not always possible to discern a clear principle governing the tactics Moulitsas employs, and the fights he takes on. And his dogmatic notions of what Democrats need to do to win can often seem idiosyncratic, prescriptive rules made on the fly. On the one hand, he frequently attacks Democrats such as Tom Daschle, for doing things that he believes damage the party's chances of winning. But when, just before the 2004 primaries began, Jonathan Chait, a *New Republic* writer, did essentially the same thing—starting a blog called "The Dean-o-phobe" that argued, on pragmatic grounds, that Dean was unlikely to win a general election and that nominating him would therefore hurt the party—Moulitsas attacked Chait for criticizing a Democrat. (At one point during this one-way feud, Moulitsas sent Chait's co-workers an email apologizing for the fact that he was going to spearhead a boycott of their magazine, telling them it was "nothing personal.")

His most curious crusade of all was the one he began in late August of 2005, when he declared on his site that he had a secret plan to destroy the Democratic Leadership Council. A few years ago, when the organization of Democratic centrists was backing the invasion of Iraq and flirting with Social Security privatization, this might have made sense. But by last year, the DLC had begun loudly denouncing Bush, particularly for his handling of Iraq, and was generally in agreement with Moulitsas and the party's activist base on a broad range of issues. Moulitsas, for his part, had spent the previous few months focused on taking on the liberal interest groups, urging Democrats to run more pro-life candidates, and to contest rural contests with rural values—all long-held tenets of the DLC. So Moulitsas' beef with the group wasn't over ideology, it was, predictably, over tactics. But even here, the ire seemed misplaced: The DLC is hardly averse to a strategy that puts winning ahead of ideological purity– it helped make its reputation in the early 90's by advising Bill Clinton to adopt just that kind of pragmatism, arguing that electoral victory was more important than philosophical correctness.

Still, Moulitsas wouldn't back down. "No calls for a truce will be brooked," he wrote. "Appeals to party unity will fall on deaf ear … We need to make the DLC radioactive. And we will. With everyone's help, we really can. Stay tuned." As the countdown continued, Moulitsas posted millennial-sounding attacks on the DLC that veered, like the writings of the Ayatollahs, between the merely portentous and the outright ludicrous. Some liberal websites, ecstatic, began speculating about what Moulitsas's plan might be; others posted countdown clocks. And then…nothing. Three days before the scheduled unveiling, Moulitsas wrote that he'd changed his mind. Hurricane Katrina, which had just struck, had made him realize, he said, that this was not the time for intra-party bickering. "We think someone got to him," a DLC staffer told me darkly.

That Moulitsas would be attacking a group with whom he generally agrees can be explained in part by his lack of historical perspective. One Washington supporter of Moulitsas told me recently: "Because of their generation and because

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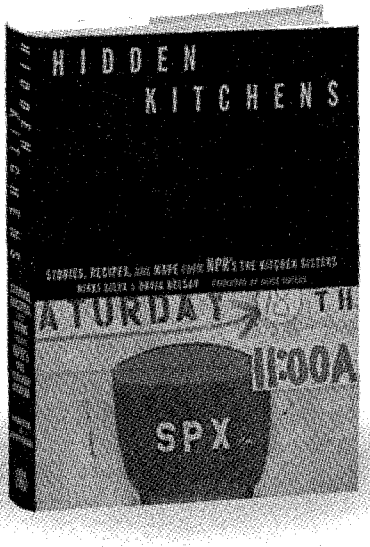

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they're Silicon Valley guys who were focused on other things, Markos and the netroots guys, their political consciousness basically begins with maybe the impeachment, and then Florida, and then Iraq, and his sense of the parties is basically, we're liberal and they're conservative. And so all of these fights the Democrats have been going through for thirty years, and the Clinton, New Democratic thing—Markos just doesn't really get it. He hasn't been reading *The New Republic* and *The Washington Monthly* forever. He just sits there and thinks, Why the hell are these guys running things? They back losers!"

Of course, it's not just Moulitsas. The younger-than-35 liberal professionals who account for most of his audience seem an ideologically satisfied group, with no fundamental, paradigm—changing demands to make of the Democratic party. They don't believe strongly, as successive generations of progressives have, that the Democratic party must develop more government programs to help the poor, or that racial and ethnic minorities are wildly underrepresented, or that the party is in need of a fundamental reform towards the pragmatic center—or at least they don't believe so in any kind of consistent or organized manner. As this generation begins to move into positions of power within the progressive movement and the Democratic party, they don't pose much of a challenge on issues, or substance. So the tactical critique takes center stage.

Moulitsas' sensibility suits his generation perfectly. But it also comes with a built-in cost. Moulitsas is just basically uninterested in the intellectual and philosophical debates that lie behind the daily political trench warfare. By his own admission, he just doesn't care about policy. It's here that the correlation between sports and politics breaks down. In sports, as Vince Lombardi is said to have put it, "Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing." When the season is over, you hang up your cleats and wait for the next season. But in politics, that's not the case – you have to govern, and if you don't govern well, you won't get re-elected. So while tactics and message are crucial, most voters will ultimately demand from politicians ideas that give them a sense of what a party is going to do once in power. Wanting to win very badly is an admirable and necessary quality in politics, and Moulitsas is right that Democrats have needed it in greater quantity. But it is not really a political philosophy.

That's not Moulitsas' fault, of course. He doesn't pretend to be a policy wonk. But the more that the Democratic party turns to Moulitsas for help, the more the limits to his movement become apparent, the less the raw animus of many liberals for the Iraq war seems likely to translate into any lasting liberal movement, and the more the current obsession with his brand of Winnerism looks misplaced. Moulitsas' great aspiration has been to make the Democratic grassroots as disciplined, directed, and on-message as any whip would want his party in Congress to be. "But at some point someone's going to have to step up and say, okay, this is where the party's got to go," Ed Kilgore, a prominent Democratic strategist and longtime member of the DLC, told me recently. "And right now it still feels awfully up for grabs."

No Bill James

Moulitsas is touchy, and far too self-assured, and easily provoked. But he's more interesting in person than he is on his blog, more thoughtful and funny and even a little bit more capable of self-criticism. He laughs, he makes fun of himself, he says absurd things and then takes them back, and then thinks again and doesn't—he actually enjoys himself. He told me a long story about egging on a blogger named Chris Bowers, who posts at MyDD.com, the same site where Moulitsas got his start. "I keep telling him, Chris, you've got to be an asshole, you're too soft for politics, the only way is to be an asshole, and you know what?" Moulitsas grins triumphantly. "He did. He's a lot tougher now."

Most other bloggers think that Moulitsas is a fame hound, a loudmouthed nerd at the back of the room pulling ever more absurd stunts to get attention—What if I *doctor* the photo of Zell Miller, so it has *fangs*, and *blood* cascading from its mouth? *What if I did it without wearing any pants?*

But the guy could be on cable television every day of the week—Moulitsas is young, smart, says cutting and ludicrous things—but he has made it a policy to refuse all television appearances, for six months now. What he's after isn't fame but power—and not any old power, but the kind of Silicon Valley-derived sense of power that holds that only the people who know how to program code can ever really run things. "All he really wants is not to be President, or Governor, or have statues built for him," one of his friends told me, "but maybe to help run the DCCC, to help Democrats win, and to have been right."

To have been right. It's not a bad ambition, as ambitions go, and we'll soon find out whether Moulitsas can achieve it. Bill James spent years arguing from the sidelines that the baseball establishment didn't understand how to properly evaluate players, and that his statistics-based approach was superior. In 2002, the Boston Red Sox hired him as a consultant, and started taking his advice. Within two years they'd won a championship. For Moulitsas, next year's election cycle might provide the test—if the powers that be continue to take his advice. That's when we'll begin to know whether the ideology of winnerism can truly be a winner.

That sense of impending judgment suits Moulitsas fine. He is acutely aware of the limits of his moment. "There are technologies that are coming out there that I just don't get—I try, but I just don't get them the way I got blogs," he told me. "Crooks and Liars is like the second biggest liberal blog now, and its all video clips. And Friendster—I have a Friendster account, I understand in the abstract that people would like the web to connect it in a certain way, but I don't get it, I don't understand how it works."

He paused for a minute, looking unusually non-agitated. "So the point is I know I have only a certain amount of time like this, and I'd like to make sure I do something useful with it."

The only nagging question is: *What?* ◆

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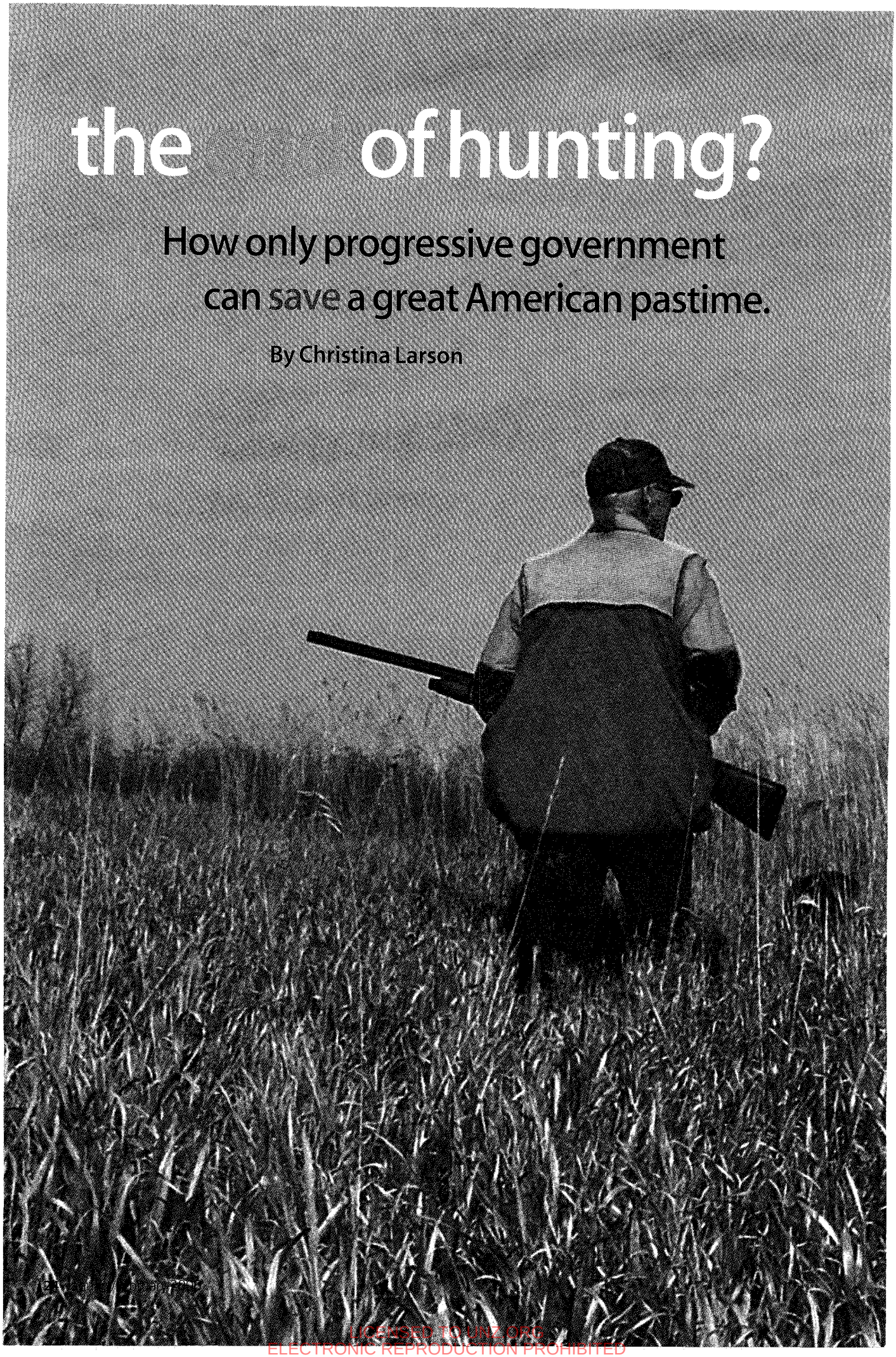
the of hunting?

How only progressive government can save a great American pastime.

By Christina Larson



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Colo, Iowa (population 900), a town about an hour northeast of Des Moines, is little more than a rail crossing, a grain elevator, and a dwindling main street. But at 7 a.m. on the opening morning of Iowa's celebrated pheasant season, the lights were on in a one-story building on Main Street where the Colo Lions Club was sponsoring a pancake breakfast for hunters. I arrived with two pheasant hunters, the three of us clad in the ubiquitous orange vests and caps of the sport, with dogs waiting in kennels in the back of a pickup. We were looking for a place to hunt.

Inside, the scene resembled the cantina from *Star Wars* in one way: It was a strategic place to gather information and try to seal a deal. Men sat around folding tables swapping stories about the birds they bagged last year, but also grousing about the difficulty of finding land where they could hunt. Iowa is 97 private land, so to have much shot at a pheasant, you pretty much need a landowner's permission to roam his fields. That's getting harder to come by these days, with old farms being sold and fence posts hung with new signs that warn, "No Trespassing."

As my companions and I filled up on pancakes, a friend of theirs walked over and pulled up a chair next to us. After helping himself to a plate, he glanced around slyly, leaned forward, and passed us an enticing tip: He had a friend who had a friend who was a local landowner and might give us permission to hunt on his land. We should drive down past Colo Bogs and look out for Joe Quaker in a grey van. Soon we were on the road, rumbling over gravel roads to the appointed meeting place. When no grey van appeared, we drove on, forced to look elsewhere for hunting ground. Occasionally, we passed hunters tromping through roadside drainage ditches, among the only public turf still available to those pheasant seekers without access to someone else's land.

Photography by Christina Larson

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Getty Images

This hunt for a spot to hunt is increasingly a part of the sportsmen's pursuit today. In the terminology of those who follow the problem, "access" is the buzzword phrase. "When you ask hunters directly what their biggest concern is, out of 20-odd possible choices, land access is most often number one," says Mark Duda of Responsive Management, a firm that conducts surveys for state wildlife departments. The scramble to find land can cause friction between hunters and landowners—in at least one instance, with tragic results. In November, a Hmong immigrant was sentenced to life in prison for killing six hunters in Wisconsin after a trespassing dispute erupted when he wandered onto their land.

The increasing difficulty of finding land to hunt on is, not surprisingly, nudging ever more hunters to hang up their shotguns. In Iowa, the number of hunters in state has dropped 26 percent in a decade, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and other states have experienced similar declines. One in three former hunters told the agency that not having a place to hunt motivated their decision to abandon their hobby. Around the country, more sportsmen each year are parking their deer stands and duck decoys in the garage.

Even so, hunting is unlikely to disappear entirely. The ranks of hunters may dwindle, but hunting itself retains a cultural resonance, calling to mind a time when pioneers depended on ingenuity and perseverance to settle the frontier and evoking a pastoral nostalgia for farm life. Americans like to think of hunting as a national tradition, even as they tool around suburban parkways in their Subaru Outbacks. Hunting and fishing are touchstones for a world that many suburban and exurban dwellers value, even if their daily lives no longer reflect it.

In American politics, few causes are more potent than those defending threatened heritage symbols. Real or perceived attacks on school prayer, the pledge of allegiance, and the etiquette of saying "Merry Christmas" have all been whipped into political maelstroms. That's largely because conservatives recognized, and then exploited, a latent but largely unorganized anger. A comparable frustration exists among hunters over land access. But conservatives haven't tapped into it because the source of this anxiety isn't a liberal bogeyman, like elitism or big government. Instead, it's the closing-off of private property and sale of public land, something many on the right defend. That means progressives could find themselves in the unexpected position of being the champions of hunters. Those states that have effectively slowed or reversed the hunting decline have done so with programs that use government to open up private lands voluntarily to public recreation. This time, it may be progressive government that holds out the best hope for preserving an American tradition.

A wink from Uncle Fred

If Americans don't hunt in the numbers that they used to, hunting goods stores aren't in danger of going out of business just yet. Hunting and fishing remain major national pastimes: In 2001, 13 million Americans headed out to hunt and 34 million to fish. The total number of "sportsmen"—men and women who hunt or fish—is 38 million today, nearly one in five Americans.

But while that's a crowd, it's a shrinking one. Over the past two decades, the percentage of Americans who hunt or fish has tumbled from 26 to 18 percent; the absolute number of sportsmen has fallen from 50 million to 38 million. The decline is related to the ripple effects of suburbanization, the gradual century-long movement of Americans from farms to cities and suburbs. Thirty years ago, many suburban residents still had relatives who lived in the country, relatives who would welcome them back to the farm to hunt on fall weekends. Now those relatives are largely gone—or suburban dwellers themselves. Today, more than two out of three sportsmen live in metropolitan areas, where their children grow up less famil-

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iar with firearms, removed from daily contact with blood and dirt, and often less comfortable with the pursuit of game as sport. Just as successive generations of immigrant families lose touch with the language and customs of the old country, the descendants of rural America simply don't have the same strong cultural attachment to the land and to hunting.

Yet there isn't an ocean separating the Old World from the New. Americans who want to reclaim their hunting heritage are at most a few hours' drive from doing so. Likewise, there's nothing preventing certain aspects of country culture from making their way into town. Other pastimes once thought of as rural, from country music to NASCAR, have found their fastest-growing markets in the suburbs of cities like Atlanta. But with hunting, the obstacles are twofold: Suburbanites are less likely to know anyone who owns land, and landowners—particularly absentee owners—are less inclined to open their property to strangers.

Back when more Americans lived a short walk from a relative or friend's farm, the way someone found a place to hunt or fish was simply by asking for permission. If Uncle Fred wasn't home, you knocked on the doors of nearby farmhouses. My dad, who grew up in Dubuque, Iowa, in the 1950s, recalls that when he and his friends stepped onto a farmer's porch, the first question was usually, "Where you boys from?" Once the farmer had sized them up, content that local boys would know not to fire a gun near cattle and not to leave gates open, they were usually sent on their way with a wink.

These days, knocking on a stranger's door, shotgun in hand, would likely meet with less success. For one thing, rural America has a greater proportion of absentee landowners: corporate farm owners, summer-home owners, investors who favor land over stocks. Those landowners who are home are more likely to eye unfamiliar hunters with suspicion. New arrivals from urban environments find it odd to share their lawns. Even old-timers like Uncle Fred are having second thoughts: Reports of trespassing and property damage are on the rise, especially near metro areas.

As "No Hunting" signs hang from more gates, ammo boxes sit unused in more sheds. In a poll of inactive New Jersey hunters, the complaint that there weren't enough places to hunt topped the list of reasons for quitting the sport. Slightly further down that list was a related concern: "too many hunters in the field." As available places to hunt diminish, hunters are squeezed onto fewer fields. In Iowa, crowds on the state's limited public hunting grounds have swelled even as hunting license sales have declined; an estimated 20 to 30 percent of Iowa hunters now hunt on the 1 percent of land that is managed for public hunting. What the crowds reveal is a growing mismatch between desire and opportunity.

Hunting with checkbooks

The old system of finding a spot to hunt was a favor among friends: "You knew the landowner down the road or got to know him," Rob Sexton at the U.S. Sportsman's Alliance remembers, "maybe shared your birds or offered to help seed a field or brought over some cakes at Christmas time." The new system is the market.

In recent years, an industry has sprung up to match hunter checkbooks with landowner bank accounts. Now, hunters can pay for exclusive recreational access to a property through a contract known as a "hunting lease." In 2001, leases averaged $636 per property for the hunting season, up 150 percent since 1991. To locate leasing opportunities, hunters post want ads on sites like Huntspot.com, listing what they are looking for and what they are willing to pay. A sportsman with the handle "Texas Law Dog," for example, wrote on behalf of five hunters seeking a hunting lease in the Lone Star panhandle; each was willing to pay $1,750 for land access.

Awarding access to the highest bidder tends to drive up prices, and consequently drives some people out. When Dave Hurteau, a columnist at *Field and Stream* magazine, solicited reader comments on the subject, he found he had touched a nerve. One reader wrote to say: "I had a lease that cost me $850 the first year, $1,100 the second, and $1,300 the third. Three years was enough for me." A hunter confirmed the high price of pay-to-play hunting: "Today, a fine South Texas lease with trophy potential [big game hunting] will run $3,500 a gun and up. And I mean way up—to around $10,000. It had gotten totally out of hand."

The rising cost of a place in the field has, according to Todd Peterson of Wisconsin's Department of Natural Resources, "priced some people out of the sport." Nationally, the number of hunters from households with below-median incomes has declined 16 percent in 15 years; over the same period, the number of hunters with above-median incomes has declined just 3 percent.

Tony Dean, a sort of Walter Cronkite of Midwestern sportsmen, who mixes walleye recipes with political commentary on the popular "Tony Dean Outdoors" show, says he fears a day when hunting and outdoor recreation become pastimes of the elite, something only the well-to-do can afford to enjoy. "Our forefathers left a European system in which wildlife and land belonged only to landowners," Dean told me. "We don't want to go back to being like the Europeans."

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Blasting snowy egrets

Indeed, in Europe the land and the creatures on it traditionally belonged to the nobility, who alone had the right to pursue game. Even today, when debates over British fox hunting arise, the descendants of dukes generally defend it while the great-grandsons of cobblers generally oppose.

But in America, something like the opposite has long been the case. In 1683, William Penn's Charter for the Commonwealth enshrined the right of the average man to hunt and fish on all lands not enclosed for livestock. One hundred and fifty years later, in 1842, a New Jersey landowner and an oysterman found themselves in front of the Supreme Court, arguing over whether Mr. Waddell owned the oysters stuck in the mud on his property. The Court ruled that he did not, and it granted sovereignty of the waterways, the soil, and the critters in them to the people of each state.

Subsequent rulings refined the unique American system that exists today: Wildlife is held in trust by the state (managed by state wildlife agencies) for the benefit of the public, who collectively own it. This idea of public ownership became the intellectual foundation for America's conservation movement a century ago, when commercial hunters had begun decimating buffalo herds and blasting snowy egrets with cannons in order to sell feathers for ladies' hats. Theodore Roosevelt and a handful of other naturalists—most of them hunters—argued that wildlife belonged to the public and therefore could not be obliterated by business interests. "Public rights comes first and private interests second," Roosevelt wrote in 1905. "The conservation of wildlife and...all our natural resources are essentially democratic in spirit, purpose, and method." He outlawed commercial hunting and promoted measures—such as bag limits and game seasons—to ensure that wildlife could be enjoyed by future generations.

In a reversal of the tragedy of the commons, the American conservation movement has been far more successful, both in garnering popular support and in saving species from extinction, than efforts in countries where a different mentality exists toward ownership of wildlife. Whereas America brought back the elk, antelope, and white-tailed deer, in Britain boars, beavers, and bears no longer roam. Today, however, this heritage faces a new challenge, unfathomable in the days of Penn or Roosevelt. As Todd Bogenschutz of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources told me, "Our forefathers made wildlife public, but they screwed another thing up. They should have made access to wildlife public."

What's right with Kansas

From the window of an airplane, Kansas looks a lot like Iowa. Both are square states, checkered in agricultural fields,

Photograph by Christina Larson

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Hunting is slowly becoming a sport of the elite. Nationally, the number of hunters with below-median incomes has declined 16 percent in 15 years; over the same period, the number of hunters with above-median incomes has declined just 3 percent.

and more than 97 percent of the largely flat land is in private hands. A glimpse at census reports shows that they are also demographically similar. Iowans and Kansans alike have been moving from the countryside to cities like Des Moines and Wichita; the two states have seen similar single-digit population growth over the last decade, and they now rank 30th and 32nd in overall state populations. And both have beloved pheasant seasons, anticipated by hunters and promoted by small-town chambers of commerce.

There is one notable difference. While the number of hunters in Iowa has dropped 26 percent in a decade, in Kansas resident hunter numbers have remained steady and out-of-state license sales have increased. It isn't that Kansas has more enthusiastic sportsmen's groups or tastier birds or prettier fields than Iowa. What it does have is a state-run program that increases access to hunting grounds.

Kansas' Walk-In Hunting Access program (WIHA)—delightfully called "wee-haw"—works with private landowners to arrange for public hunting use of their land. It started a decade ago after the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks polled inactive hunters and found that access was the greatest obstacle to hunting. In 1995, a pilot version of WIHA debuted in seven counties around Wichita, encompassing 10,000 acres of land. Since then, the program has grown to include over one million acres across the state.

In early November, on opening morning of this fall's pheasant season, Mike Thompson and his son Brandon drove 40 minutes west from their home in Wichita, parked their truck beside a field of tall grass, and hopped out to don orange vests. Signs bordering the field read: "Walk-In Hunting Area, foot traffic only." Anyone with a $19 resident hunting license can hunt on WIHA land, and it's not hard to find convenient sites. Mike had noticed the signs for this particular spot while driving; he might also have found it by con-

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Photograph by Christina Larson

The seven states with hunting access programs large enough and in existence long enough to have had an impact on statewide hunting participation—Oregon, Montana, Washington, Kansas, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Pennsylvania (whose programs each include 500,000 or more acres and have been operating for roughly a decade or longer)—have seen the number of hunters in state either rise, hold steady, or dip at a rate far slower than would otherwise be expected, given urbanization and other factors.

During a decade in which the number of hunters declined by 7 percent nationally, the seven states with sizable access programs collectively saw the total number of hunters in state (resident and nonresident) *rise* by nearly 5 percent.

Moreover, when one compares, to the extent possible, apples to apples, states with access programs fare significantly better than other states with similar demographic profiles (comparable rates of population growth, population density, and ratios of public to private land). All figures reflect data collected by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. —*C.L.*

State	Hunters in State - % change (1991-2001)
Montana (access program)	**+3**
Nevada	-18
Kansas (access program)	**+20**
Iowa	-26
Oregon (access program)	**-2**
Colorado*	-19
Pennsylvania (access program)	**-3**
Ohio	-20
Washington (access program)	**-8**
North Carolina	-26
South Dakota (access program)**	**+42**
North Dakota (access program)**	**+42**

* Colorado has since started a preliminary access program.
** Both North and South Dakota have seen a spike in license sales to hunters in neighboring states. As these state's populations are relatively small, the statistical impact of the gains is high.

sulting an online atlas of available sites or flipping through a listing at Cabela's, the sportsmen's megastore.

The Thompsons were walking back to their truck, a bird in hand and a black lab trotting ahead of them, when a state wildlife department employee pulled up to distribute survey cards. Mike said he had relatives in Illinois with hunting land, but that was "a real long drive"—having a destination under an hour away was much better. "I'd pay for this program," Mike offered. The biologist tipped his hat, a burnt orange cap that read "Kansas Hunting Access," and said, "There's an address on that card if you want to send a donation. We'll send you a hat."

That same morning, LaVeda Cross, longtime resident of the small town of Lewis, Kansas, watched hunters pour into restaurants where cooks had fired up griddles and coffee pots before dawn. Cross owns about 3,000 acres that members of her family homesteaded generations ago outside of town. Four years ago, she contacted the state wildlife agency about enrolling her land in WIHA; a wildlife biologist came out to inspect habitat conditions before offering her a contract and negotiating the compensation. Payments vary based on habitat and hunting seasons, but the average rate is $1.25 per acre in Kansas. (That's in addition to any money a landowner makes farming or grazing the land, or enrolling it in a federal conservation reserve program.) Cross now lives in town; her son works the land. She tells me it's harder to make a living on the farm than it used to be, and the spike in fuel prices hit hard this harvest season. So, while the payment from the wildlife department is not a lot, "It's a simple way to make a little bit of money and help keep up income and repairs."

And there's another reason Cross likes WIHA: She's grateful for Charlie Swank, a wildlife biologist who wears his ten-gallon hat on official business and calls Cross regularly to keep her informed of what's happening on the land. Before she enrolled her land in WIHA, Cross had problems with hunters trespassing and taking pot shots at the windmills on the farm ("The ones who don't ask permission tend to be the reckless ones"). Now, the state has authority to watch over the land and assumes limited liability, which otherwise would rest with Cross and other landowners. More people use her land now, but according to Cross, there have been far fewer problems with property damage: "I really look forward to the time when the hunters come back," she tells me.

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According to the department's annual surveys, just one in five landowners live on the enrolled property, though many, including Cross, reside nearby. With fewer farmers each overseeing larger plots of land, monitoring property has become a big concern. Eighty-one percent of landowners said that state patrol of their lands was a "very important" or "moderately important" component of the Kansas program. Each year, Cross says, she turns down an offer for a more lucrative private lease from a group of Colorado hunters, in part because of the "peace of mind" the state program provides.

Kansas is one of seven states that has operated a sizable access program (involving 500,000 or more acres) for a decade or longer. In each of these seven states, the number of hunters in state has either gone up, held steady, or dipped at a rate far slower than would otherwise be expected, given urbanization and other demographic changes. (See sidebar, page 30.) During a decade in which the number of hunters nationally declined by 7 percent, those states with large. established access programs collectively saw the number of hunters in state (resident and nonresident) *rise* by nearly 5 percent.

Access programs are wildly popular with hunters, benefit landowners and farmers, and promise to slow hunting's decline, at least for the moment. The only question seems to be: Why aren't more states embracing them?

A bunch of biologists making policy

Given the escalating payments that private leasers are willing to make in order to secure land access, some skeptics question whether states can afford to be competitive in the deals they offer to landowners. As LaVeda Cross and other owners, especially the growing cadre of absentee landowners, can

Gawn' Fishin'

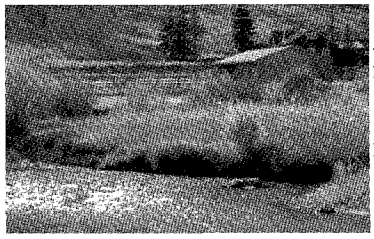
Recent ads in *The Baltimore Sun* feature a grinning 10-year-old girl with blond hair and ruddy cheeks, perched in a boat. The caption beside her reads, "Take me fishing. Because my wedding will be sooner than you think." A second ad pictures an old man sitting cross-legged in a boat: "Take me fishing. I want to feel like a boy again."

The ads, produced by the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation, are designed to lure Americans back to the lakes and rivers where they used to fish. As with hunters, the ranks of active anglers have thinned, from 23 percent of Americans in 1985 to 16 percent in 2001. The absolute number of anglers has also been dropping; in the Great Lakes region, where reeling in walleyes has long been a hallowed tradition, the numbers of fishermen is down 28 percent in the last decade.

Chief among the reasons for the decline is the difficulty of finding a place to fish, especially for the 72 percent of anglers living in metro areas. Most navigable waterways are by statute owned by and open to the public, but getting to streams and lakes often requires a short trek across private lands. And those who own the ever-more-valuable plots of land next to water are increasingly less willing to grant such right-of-way, especially to people they don't know.

Some states have begun to address the problem. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department contracts with ranchers whose property includes or abuts bodies of water to permit public access. After negotiating appropriate payment, wildlife officers post signs demarcating areas open to the public. Anglers can plan trips with the aid of maps of enrolled properties available online. The program has grown each year since it started in the mid-1990s and now encompasses 225 miles of streams. Survey feedback from hunters and landowners has been enthusiastic, but the most promising sign is boots in the water: While fishing declined nationally in the last decade, angling days in Wyoming moderately increased.

Other states, including Kansas, are developing similar fishing programs, often as sister ventures to hunting access efforts. Among the most innovative efforts can be found an hour west of Denver, in Colorado's Park County ("the *real* South Park" runs one tourism slogan, a nod to the iconoclastic Comedy Central cartoon whose creator grew up there). The mountainous county contains some of the nation's finest trout streams, but getting to the best waters has been a problem because the streams run mostly through privately-owned ranchland. Two years ago, the county partnered with the state's Great Outdoors Colorado initiative to launch an Internet-based system that matches eager fly-fishermen with ranchers looking for some extra income. Anglers can browse maps and photos of trout streams online, then reserve a spot with a credit-card payment (only two anglers are permitted per property per day to avoid over-crowding), with much of the money going directly to


Photograph by Gary Nichols

the landowners. For example, a day of fishing rainbow trout on Upper Fourmile Creek Ranch costs about the price of a moderate dinner, $30. With prize trout and enthusiastic word of mouth, during its first year the program reached 70 percent capacity in the peak summer months.

Now Gary Nichols, director of the county's community development and tourism office, is looking to expand the model to turn South Park into a vacation destination not just for hardcore fly-fishermen, but for whole families interested in a nature experience. Currently he's in talks with interested ranchers about what recreation they would like to provide on their lands: wildlife viewing areas (bobcats, deer, coyote, elk, and other animals are all native), bike paths, heritage trails along an old railroad line with markers at historic sites. "We're trying to combine conservation and heritage preservation with economic development and recreation," he explains. Nichols, who was raised in Denver, can remember when he was just a knock on a friend or relative's door from having a spot to go fishing or hunting or hiking: "That was something I knew growing up, and I guess I'm now trying to recreate it."

—Christina Larson

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attest, part of the attraction of an access program is the peace of mind that comes with authorizing someone else to watch over your land. But some states have also worked with landowners to develop creative methods of compensation that meet their specific needs. In Pennsylvania, for instance, the state offers landowners habitat consultations with state biologists and free seedlings in lieu of payments. Oregon has hired retired state troopers to beef up patrol of lands enrolled in its access program. The goal is to identify ways to supplement cash payments to landowners with services that draw upon the state's expertise—and provide a market advantage over private leasers.

In addition, cash-strapped state capitals, under political pressure from conservative activists to avoid raising taxes, are loathe to implement new programs that require additional funding. Even though hunting season can be a significant economic generator for rural economies—filling main-street restaurants and roadside motels—state legislatures have not clamored to start access program to attract more hunters. In almost every case (Oregon is the exception), the initiative to start such programs has come instead from state wildlife departments. "It's kinda dangerous," says Mike Mitchener, Kansas's wildlife section chief, "a bunch of biologists getting into policy and marketing."

What states have found, however, is that access programs can have benefits that exceed their costs. Kansas has paid for its $1.5 million program largely by redistributing its existing wildlife operating budget, which is only just over $3 million annually. Yet wildlife-related recreation is estimated to bring a hefty sum of $591 million to the state each year. In Oregon, a $2 surcharge on hunting licenses has funded its access program. But despite polls that show hunters in other states are willing to pay a modest charge to fund access programs, wildlife agencies have found it difficult to convince legislatures to embrace anything that looks like a tax hike.

If politicians realized the potential support for access programs beyond the nation's relatively small cadre of hunters, they might be more enthusiastic about the political benefits of expanding Americans' access to enjoy wildlife on private lands.

Wildlife belongs to all of us

Access programs are an elegant way to stem hunting's slow demise. Yet the potential of the idea extends far beyond hunting, for sportsmen aren't the only ones having a tough time finding a spot to enjoy nature. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, "non-consumptive wildlife recreation," a category that includes such pursuits as nature hiking and bird watching, has also declined—13 percent in a decade. This drop has occurred even as visits to national parks have increased substantially, suggesting that Americans' demand for experiencing nature hasn't diminished, it's just outstripped the supply of accessible land.

Access programs could provide an answer. In Wyoming and other states, programs are being adapted to help anglers (see sidebar, page 31). In Pennsylvania, lands managed under the state's hunting access program already attract horseback riders and hikers. And because many access programs target acreage near metropolitan areas, giving landowners a small incentive not to sell out too quickly to developers (and developers a modest reason to hold off building on land they own), these programs ought to be popular with everyone from Boy Scouts to mountain-bike dealers to suburban anti-sprawl advocates.

It takes time for any new idea to percolate nationally, and the origins of access programs (in conversations in the field, and between regional fish and wildlife departments) are literally as grassroots as they come. But another reason these programs haven't yet caught fire in Washington may have more to do with the fact that conservatives currently dominate every foothold of federal government. Polling shows that hunters and anglers vote predominantly, though not overwhelmingly, Republican. On some issues, such as gun rights, the GOP has courted these groups intently. But on hunting and fishing land access, conservatives have routinely supported industrial interests over those of sportsmen.

The Bush administration has pushed sales of oil and gas drilling rights on public land in the West, much of it prime habitat and hunting and fishing range, sparking increasingly loud protests from sportsmen's groups. Outrage at plans to allow exploratory drilling near Montana's Rocky Mountain Front (oft-dubbed "America's Serengeti," a trophy-hunter's paradise) convinced the White House to back off before the last election. The latest outcry occurred over language House Resources Committee chairman Richard Pombo (R-Calif.) inserted into a GOP-backed budget bill. The legislation would allow the sell-off of vast holdings of public lands to mining companies and developers.

Liberals hardly have a better record at championing sportsmen's causes. Local chapters of the Sierra Club, for instance, have campaigned against everything from dove hunting in Minnesota to the culling of black bears in New Jersey—even though state wildlife biologists insist the hunts pose no ecological risks. Some environmental leaders, though, are beginning to find philosophic and political common ground with sportsmen's groups, pursuing partnerships on a variety of fronts, including private land access. So are some Democrats in Congress.

For the last two years, Sen. Kent Conrad (D-N.D.) and Sen. Pat Roberts (R-Kansas) have introduced an "Open Fields" bill. The measure would provide $20 million a year for five years in federal money for states to establish or expand access programs for "hunting, fishing, bird-watching, and related outdoor activities." That any elected official would fail to support such an inexpensive, uncontroversial, and potentially popular bill might be hard to imagine. Yet in both GOP-dominated houses of Congress the measure has garnered nearly twice as many Democratic co-sponsors as Republican, and consequently not gone very far.

As long as the conservative ethos reigns in Washington and in state capitals, then America's hunting, fishing, and outdoors culture will almost certainly continue to decline. The best hope for protecting this heritage probably rests with elected officials of a progressive bent, Republicans as well as Democrats—officials who are ideologically comfortable using government to assert a right bequeathed by America's political forefathers: that wildlife belongs not to private interests but to the public. ◆

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The Rise & Fall of Imperial Democracies

From the Beltway to Bangkok, Moscow to Manila, elected leaders are using the threat of terror to grab more power—and making the threat worse.

By Joshua Kurlantzick

Thai soldiers patrol on motorcycles in Pattani province in southern Thailand.

Getty Images

In most parts of Thailand, it's difficult to avoid the vibrant nightlife. At dusk, food vendors wheel their carts out into public squares and start cooking phat thai, stir-fries, and grilled fish. Thais nibble until late: Night markets stay open until the early morning, and people shop for essentials close to midnight. Even Thailand's smallest towns usually have one or two nightspots, and Bangkok has a reputation as one of the world's after-dark capitals.

But in Yala, a small city in the deep south of Thailand, the situation is far different. As the sun sets around 6:30 in the evening, shopkeepers frantically draw metal gates over the front of their stores. Traffic exits the center city, and people hurry home as quickly as they can, rarely walking alone. When I try to stop someone to ask for directions, he shrugs me off and walks quickly in the other direction, a coldness rare in normally friendly Thailand. Even the brothels that used to cater to visiting Malaysians don't open at night. At army checkpoints set up across the town, Thai soldiers dressed in camouflage and carrying heavy assault rifles stop locals and search them from head-to-toe. Every few hundred meters, groups of soldiers set up heavy machine guns, surrounded by sandbags, at intersections. The entire town seems cloaked in fear.

There's reason to worry. Over the past two years, the deep south of Thailand—the three Muslim-majority provinces abutting the Malaysian border—has been hit with a wave of brutal violence. Encouraged by al Qaeda's Southeast Asia affiliates, some Muslim Thais have engaged in terror attacks, and

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the Thai government has reacted with deadly force. Though the bloodshed has received almost no attention in the Western media, nearly 1,000 people have died during the past year. Almost every day, soldiers, schoolteachers, provincial officials, policemen, and monks are shot, knifed, or attacked with bombs. With foreign assistance, southern Thai insurgents are beginning to form into groups and launch more sophisticated attacks.

Just five years ago, southern Thailand was relatively peaceful. The army had only a limited presence in the region, and no one feared walking on the streets at night. Tourism flourished, and Buddhist, Muslim, and Christian religious leaders maintained close contacts. In fact, many political scientists cited southern Thailand as a model of how a government could successfully promote interfaith harmony and integrate a Muslim minority.

It's no surprise that the change is partially due to al Qaeda, whose networks have pressed to politicize and make more violent a growing Thai Islamism. But the ratcheting-up of the conflict also owes much to decisions made by the government itself. The leadership of the aggressive, autocratic, self-aggrandizing Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra has exacerbated the insurgency problem. But though Thaksin's heavy-handed tactics—repressing independent voices in the media and bureaucracy in times of crisis, locking up members of Islamic opposition parties, and cracking down on institutions that gave the country's Muslim minorities a role in their own governance—seem like the work of a tyrant, they're not. When the most sweeping of the prime minister's actions came to light, the electorate endorsed them, returning Thaksin to office with huge majorities in Parliament.

In times of conflict, this is how even democracies tend to behave: Leaders consolidate executive power and punish dissension, while the electorate rewards them—at least initially—for such shows of strength. The war on terror has given cover to governments around the globe—from Italy and Russia to the Philippines and Thailand to even the United States—that have followed this pattern, becoming imperial democracies. But as the example of Thailand vividly shows, heavy-handed efforts in the name of taking on terror have succeeded only in making violent Islamism a more profound and urgent threat.

Thais love Thais

Up until the turn of the twentieth century, much of southern Thailand was an independent Muslim sultanate called Pattani. When Bangkok annexed the region in 1902, anger in the Muslim population began to slowly simmer. By the 1960s and 70s, it was boiling over, and southern separatists formed a group called the Pattani United Liberation Organization, or PULO. In response, the military governments that ruled Bangkok dispatched battalions to the South, leading to constant skirmishing over the course of two decades. Still, even in the midst of the worst violence, PULO never had a strong religious component—it was instead a Malay nationalist organization. After the end of the Vietnam War, the Thai government finally focused on its problems in the south. And as the country moved to democracy in the 1980s and 90s, Bangkok utilized wise policies to pacify its southern citizens.

Thai prime ministers during this period promoted decentralization, investing local and provincial officials with more decision-making power. They also created an institution called *aw baw taw*, a task force comprised of local officials, military and policy commanders, and citizen representatives that provided an outlet for grievances—the *aw baw taw* allowed local journalists, lawyers, and human rights activists to uncover abuses and make them public. Bangkok also reduced the army presence in the south, withdrawing battalions and confining troops to bases. According to Zachary Abuza, an expert on terrorism in Southeast Asia at Simmons College, even when the military had to search for insurgents, it was careful not to alienate local communities by assigning military leaders to the effort who were southern natives and spoke the local languages.

Through such measures, the government in Bangkok was able to convince many Muslims that they had a stake in Thailand's political and economic future. In the late 1990s, the prominent sociologist Saroja Dorairajoo found that most Thai Muslims considered themselves Thai first and Muslims second. Perhaps most importantly, PULO had become wildly unpopular with the southern population and essentially dissolved.

In the run-up to the 2001 national election, the country was still recovering from the Asian financial crisis, which many Thais blamed on the ruling Democrat Party. Sensing an opportunity, Thaksin Shinawatra, a telecommunications mogul, formed a new party called Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais). Thaksin's personal charisma and savvy campaign strategies, along with lingering resentment at the Democrats, helped Thai Rak Thai sweep 249 of the 500 seats in parliament, the largest number a single Thai party had ever controlled.

Early on, Thaksin displayed some authoritarian tendencies. His flagship company, Shin Corporation, purchased Thailand's most independent television station, iTV, and promptly fired 23 journalists who had been critical of the new prime minister. Shin also pulled advertising from print publications that did not back Thaksin.

Primed for disaster

After September 11, Thaksin initially downplayed the threat his country faced from Islamic terrorists, for fear that heightened concerns would hurt Thailand's booming tourist industry. But in 2002, leaders of Jemaah Islamiah—an al Qaeda-linked group that seeks to establish an Islamic caliphate in Southeast Asia—met in Thailand to plan attacks. Soon after, Thai police foiled a bomb threat against a luxury hotel in Bangkok. JI members began crossing into southern Thailand, and intelligence forces identified a small number of close associates of Osama bin Laden, including top bin Laden deputy Walid Muhammad Salih, who were living in Thailand.

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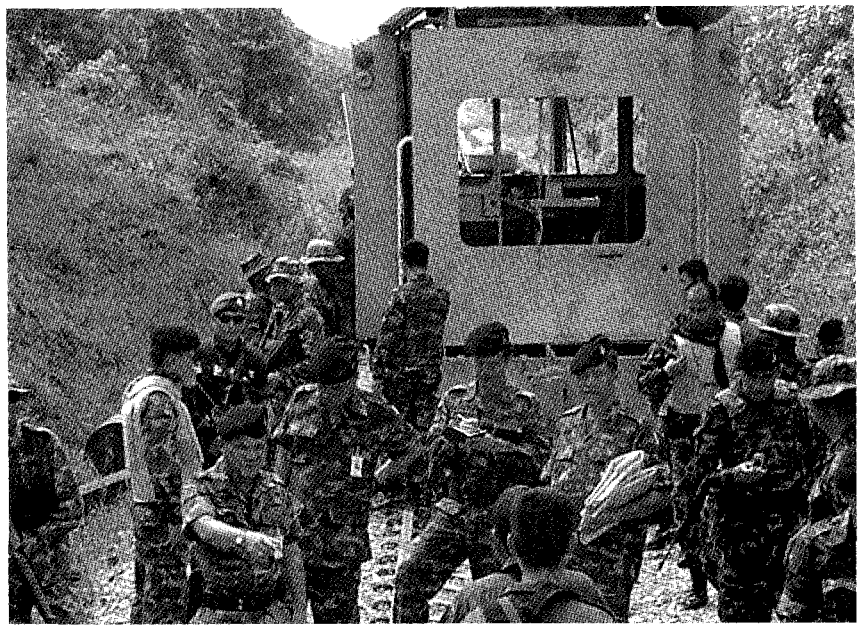
As the threat of terror become more real, Thaksin stopped downplaying it. As had leaders in other democracies facing terrorist attacks, Thaksin worked to convince Thais that some abrogation of their civil liberties would be necessary for the upcoming battle, and that they needed a strong, vigilant leader. "Whenever or wherever a society or community is not safe, freedoms and personal rights . . . must face some limitations in order to have all people living together in peace," Thaksin told Thais in a national speech.



Thai soldiers inspect damage from a train bomb attack in Narathiwat province, southern Thailand.

Initially, most Thais accepted this argument. With their support, Thaksin pushed to pass an emergency powers law—think of it as a Thai Patriot Act—which gave government the power to tap phones, hold suspects without charges, and censor the press regarding issues related to the south.

Thaksin also weakened judicial institutions by publicly challenging the authority of prominent judges and attempting to name his associates to the bench. Thaksin also dismantled the *aw baw taw*, thereby eliminating the main outlet for local grievances. Civil servants who questioned the government, most notably reformist army chief Surayud Chulanont, were dismissed or reassigned to ceremonial posts. The prime minister also took care to strengthen ties between the state and the business community in order to ensure corporate support for his policies. A 2003 study by Vanderbilt University revealed that Thailand had the second-greatest number of companies with connections to the governing party (Russia had the most), and eight of the ten largest conglomerates in the country had representatives in Thaksin's cabinet. Finally, in February and May 2003, alone, Human Rights Watch reported, an astonishing 2,275 people were shot dead in Thailand in apparent extrajudicial executions. Thaksin gave no ground. Questioned about the killings, he bluntly responded, that "being ruthless. . .is not a bad thing."

The public didn't seem to care. New elections in February 2005 added more than 150 seats to his party's total in parliament. And Thaksin's personal popularity remained high, bolstered by the perception that he was a strong leader. Drawing upon this widespread approval, Thaksin was able to portray opponents as isolated voices, unpatriotic losers. Last year, after enduring heavy criticism from liberal Thai media outlets, Thaksin announced that the press should "think of the country. These days, when foreign countries criticize us, they quote media reports."

Media intimidation was one thing; the fate of Thaksin's political opponents was even harsher. Human rights workers reported that during the same period, at least 100 anti-government activists in southern Thailand had disappeared.

Anger in southern Thailand resurfaced. In addition to outrage over Thaksin's increasingly harsh "anti-terror" policies and treatment of political opponents, southerners were outraged that while the post-9/11 economic downturn had hit them hard, prominent politicians and business leaders seemed not to be suffering. The assets of Thaksin's family reportedly grew by 70 percent in 2004 alone.

The prime minister increased the military and police presence again in the south, rotating in fresh troops, building roadblocks and preparing for a more serious crackdown, moves which slid under Washington's radar. The situation in Thailand was primed for disaster.

"A mini Afghanistan"

Five years earlier, Thais in the south could have aired their problems with the *aw baw taw*, or through local MPs. Now, with the *aw baw taw* disbanded and Thaksin consolidating government power, many southerners had nowhere to turn.

At the same time, the Thai government reported that Jemaah Islamiah and other groups connected to al-Qaeda were moving into southern Thailand in greater force. In 2003, according to Zachary Abuza, Thai immigration noted that 128 "followers of Al Qaeda" passed through Thailand. Some of these bin Laden associates were traveling to the south, where they searched for recruits and used funding from the Persian Gulf states to establish radical Islamist schools and charities. Small-scale bombings erupted in southern Thailand in 2002, and fighters began raiding government arsenals, presumably to stockpile weapons for future terrorist attacks. Four new Islamist/separatist organizations sprung up in the south, according to Abuza, and appeared to have at least informal communication with each other.

Meanwhile, with the expansion of Thai satellite television in the late 1990s and early 2000s, it became easier for south-

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erners to obtain channels from the Middle East. As coverage of the war in Iraq turned into a stream of anti-Western sentiment, some southern viewers turned more openly religious and political. Teachers in the provinces reported larger numbers of students coming to school veiled, and mosque attendance rose; suddenly, there were Hamas-style pro-Palestine rallies in southern towns, complete with violent anti-Semitic imagery and militant rhetoric. Southern Thailand's conflicts started appearing on Islamic satellite television channels, alongside Iraq and the West Bank. Professor Abuza believes that JI sees southern Thailand as a "mini-Afghanistan"—a place to foster sectarian conflict and then send recruits.

With economic and social grievances rising in the south of Thailand, little outlet for dissent, and an increasingly internationalized population, only a spark was needed. In January 2004, it finally came when a small group of insurgents raided a government army camp, killing four soldiers and making off with a cache of arms. The frequency of terror attacks—and the severity of the government's response—increased immediately. Later that same month, three Buddhist monks were stabbed to death near Yala. In March, a bomb destroyed a tourist bar on the Malaysian border, and 29 government buildings were torched.

Thaksin dispatched thousands more soldiers to the south and set up military checkpoints around the region—today the forces dominate towns like Yala and Narathiwat, forcing pedestrians and drivers to stop every 100 or 200 meters—officially turning southern Thailand into a war zone. While many Buddhist Thais in the south welcomed this military intervention, most Muslim southerners, who were not targets of insurgent attacks, were further inflamed by the deployment. On April 28, a group of radicals allegedly attacked government targets; security forces who battled with the men killed more than 100 teenagers and men. Human rights activists questioned whether the killings had been executions, since local reports suggested many people had actually been shot in the back. Many of the casualties occurred in the sacred Kru Se mosque, splattering its walls with blood, and further offending Muslims in the region.

As the situation in the south worsened, Thaksin chose not to respond by restoring rights and freedoms. Strengthened by his personal convictions and by the idea that as a democratic leader he would enjoy public support for anything he did, he took the opposite approach, muscling the press more and consolidating power. His notion of democracy only strengthened his resolve. "Thaksin's idea of democracy is he does what he wants, every four years you decide whether he's right, and then if you vote for him, shut up again for four more years," one Thai expert told me.

By early 2005, it was becoming apparent that the situation was out of control. Security checkpoints made it almost impossible for many southerners to get to the area's rubber plantations, a vital source of income. The insurgents were gaining popularity, and many southerners regarded the men killed at Kru Se as martyrs. In one famous incident, scared Thai security forces bound up more than 100 demonstrators, threw them in the back of trucks, and drove them four hours away to a military base—three-quarters of the prisoners died of asphyxiation during the journey. Today, rebels launch well-coordinated bomb attacks on a daily basis, and some insurgents have started kidnapping civilians and beheading them, Iraq-style. Assassinations of provincial officials, teachers, and monks have become routine. Over 30,000 people have fled the south in the past year alone.

Don't drink the orange juice

Other democratic leaders have also used the cover of the war on terror to turn their nations into imperial democracies, suspending rights and wielding military power in the name of security. In Russia, Vladimir Putin is less charismatic than Thaksin, but he benefits from a citizenry that has already soured on some aspects of democracy, which they link to the sometimes venal and often chaotic rule of Boris Yeltsin. After 9/11, Putin quickly made common cause with the White House's war on terror, using it as an opportunity to deal with the insurgency in Chechnya, which had spilled over into attacks in Moscow and other major cities. Money from the Persian Gulf was allegedly flowing into Chechnya, and—as in Thailand—al Qaeda-linked groups were targeting the region, looking for radicalized young recruits.

In response, Putin argued that a strong state was the only solution to dealing with terror. He also rallied nationalism, portraying Chechnya as an existential threat to Russia, and making few comments when gangs in the streets of Moscow and St. Petersburg began to target Chechens and many other dark-skinned people, including foreigners from Africa.

From there, Putin only tightened his control of the press and independent institutions. Earlier this year, he dismissed his prime minister, Mikhail Kasyanov, one of the few politicians willing to criticize his policies, and solidified even more ties between big business and the government than the Thai government did. Putin pushed through a rule making provincial governships appointed, rather than elected, positions. Finally, critical programs on NTV, the last truly liberal Russian station, were shut down in 2004, and prominent, and critical, NTV journalist Leonid Parfenov was fired after he interviewed the wife of a Chechen leader and questioned whether the Russian security services had murdered her husband.

Putin wasn't shy about using his power, and politically it worked. According to Reporters Without Borders, coverage of the hostage crisis in Beslan in 2004 was blatantly censored, and prominent journalists disappeared or were killed; *Forbes* writer Paul Klebnikov, who wrote articles critical of Putin and his business allies, was murdered in 2004. Russia's liberal political parties have been eviscerated, with Yabloko—the prominent liberal bloc—taking only four percent of the vote in the most recent parliamentary election.

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, President Megawati Sukarnoputri used the fear of terror after 9/11 to rally Indonesia against insurgents in the province of Aceh. The province had been the site of a long-running battle between insurgents and the armed forces, but in the early part of this decade, violence in

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Aceh had subsided, as both Jakarta and the rebels had moved towards peace negotiations. When the peace talks broke up in 2003, however, Megawati unleashed combat operations in Aceh and declared martial law in the province, hoping to pressure the insurgents into returning to the negotiating table. Journalists and Indonesian NGOs had their access to Aceh restricted, while the armed forces killed hundreds of civilians.

Like Thaksin, Megawati defended her policies through appeals to nationalism—the Jakarta government even instituted a patriotism test for civil servants. Again, this nationalism worked politically. Even after sketchy reports of widespread casualties in the province, the crackdown in Aceh was broadly popular in other parts of Indonesia.

A few critics did speak up. "We are now afraid that this situation in Aceh is (becoming) like a stepping stone to develop a new authoritarian regime in Indonesia," said Munir, the country's leading human rights activist. But Munir paid for his sentiments. On a flight from Indonesia to Europe in September 2004, Munir was invited into business class by an off-duty airline employee who allegedly had been in close contact with a top Indonesian intelligence officer, and was served some orange juice. By the time the plane arrived in Amsterdam, the activist—who had been healthy when he got on board—was dead. An autopsy uncovered a deadly dose of arsenic in his body.

In Pakistan—where democracy is weak and intermittent—Pervez Musharraf has leveraged the war on terror to win support from the Bush administration, bolstered the powers he won through a military coup with a series of farcical referendums, and manipulated national elections to sideline the major opposition parties. Mikhail Saakhashvili, the Georgian president brought to power by the Rose Revolution, has used nationalistic appeals in the face of a hostile Muslim minority to jail critical journalists, amend the constitution to centralize executive power, and win a mid-term election with the Stalin-like vote total of 95 percent. In the Philippines, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, whose military is fighting a guerrilla war against armed Muslim groups in the country's south, has suggested outlawing protest rallies and pushed for a Patriot Act-like counterterrorism law.

Four years after the global war on terror began, problems with Muslim insurgencies have not subsided—and in some cases, they have actually worsened. And at the same time, many of the strong-arm tactics adopted by these democracies have begun to backfire politically. By trying to restore to Russia the same sort of overbearing, centralized system that characterized the Soviet Union, and by launching new military campaigns in Chechnya, Putin has made the situation in the North Caucuses worse than it was when he took office. In Indonesia, Megawati's strategy of pouring more and more troops into Aceh without creating any system for dialogue with the people there succeeded only in turning more provincial residents against the government.

The United States, of course, is no Indonesia or Russia, but even on a smaller scale, the similarities persist. President George W. Bush tapped a powerful vein of nationalism and fear after 9/11 to expand his authority, intimidate opponents, reward corporations allied with his party, and punish dissent within the government. He then used his enhanced powers to invade and occupy Iraq and to capture and imprison thousands of individuals suspected, rightly or wrongly, of being terrorists. But news of the brutal treatment of Muslim prisoners in U.S. jails has only deepened anti-American anger in the Islamic world, and the ill-advised invasion and inept occupation of Iraq has turned that country into a bloody and chaotic breeding ground for the next generation of terrorists and insurgents.

Democratic strength and weakness

In democracies—even those with weakened civil societies and enfeebled judiciaries—popular opinion still matters. For their part, Thais have begun to wake up from Thaksin's spell. This summer, the prime minister's popularity ratings fell below 50 percent, and confidence in his government has remained low ever since. The Thai media, like its counterparts in the United States and other democracies where initial rally-around-the-flag sentiment has waned, has become more aggressive. Thai journalists have probed procurement scandals in Thaksin's government, and they united to help defeat an effort by one of the prime minister's allies to buy into the most respected Thai-language newspaper, *Matichon*. Even in parliament, where Thaksin controls the majority of the seats, MPs have become so disgusted with Thaksin's style, as well as the continued violence in the south, that some of the prime minister's own party members have begun to speak out against him. Elsewhere, a popular movement in the Philippines has attempted to push Arroyo out of office, Bush's ratings are among the lowest for a second-term president in modern history, and even Putin's popularity fell to record lows earlier this year.

So far, Thaksin, Putin, Bush, and others have been unwilling to heed the shift in public opinion. This refusal is due in part to the fact that these leaders all seem to have a tendency never to admit mistakes. But it is also because once the idea of imperial democracy becomes entrenched in a leader's mind, it is very hard to give up. After all, the institutions and culture of a democracy—a powerful judiciary, an aggressive press, a vibrant civil society—can prove extremely frustrating to leaders who want to push through massive changes. In the past four years, as many of those institutions vanished, democratic leaders around the world got used to operating with few constraints, and found they loved it.

Terrorism and insurgencies provide elected officials with an opportunity to exploit an inherent weakness of democracies—the willingness, even eagerness, of their citizens to hand near-authoritarian powers to strong leaders in return for the promise of security. But the lesson of the last five years is that authoritarian tactics tend not to quell insurgencies, but to make them worse. And when that happens, democracies exhibit an inherent strength: their tendency to demand accountability. ◆

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The Go-Go '00s

Can an updated Clintonism fix the economy? Maybe.

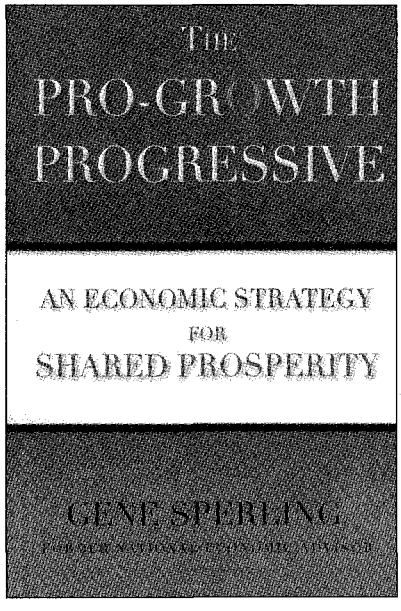
By Sebastian Mallaby

Gene Sperling is one of Washington's good guys. If you admire brains and compassion, and if you are at all stirred by the idea that government is about helping people, it's impossible not to like him. So I begin this review with an honest disclosure: I do like him, a lot. This doesn't mean that I always agree with him.

Sperling's book states the case for Clintonomics, the bundle of policies he helped to create during his eight years in the White House where he served as Deputy National Economic Adviser during the Clinton's first presidential term and National Economic Adviser during the second one.

Clintonomics was about two things—market-driven growth on the one hand, progressive social goals on the other—and this explains Sperling's title: *The Pro-Growth Progressive.* Faint-hearted readers should be warned: This is a book by a policy wonk, for policy wonks, and you have to be interested in refundable tax credits to make it from cover to cover. But if you want to get your mind around what the centrist wing of the Democratic Party is thinking, Sperling provides a sophisticated argument.

One of the best parts of the book comes right at the outset. In a "Memo to Progressives," Sperling lays out why free-market competition and economic growth can be good—not just for corporate profits but for ordinary people. Competition brings prices for consumers down; it can create more jobs than it demolishes. Anybody inclined to think that economic churn is bad should regard 1999 (number of American jobs destroyed: 32.9 million) as a worse year than 2003 (number of jobs destroyed: 30.2 million). But 1999 was, in fact, the better year for American workers because turbocharged job creation outpaced job destruction by 2.6 million positions, whereas 2003 witnessed a net loss in the number of jobs available.



The Pro-Growth Progressive
By Gene Sperling
Simon & Schuster, $26.95

The globalization wrought by the collapse of communism and technological advance is often viewed with suspicion by many on the left. But Sperling reminds us that these shifts coincided with tremendous gains for poor Americans (not to mention the fastest progress the world has made against destitution in developing countries in history). From 1992 to 2000, every quintile of the income distribution in the United States saw incomes increase. Those in the bottom fifth saw a gain of 22 percent, and the income growth of the average African-American family outpaced that of the average white one. By 2000, the end of the first decade of globalization—the poverty rate had fallen to its lowest level since the second oil shock and home ownership was at a record high. As Sperling gently suggests, this "should make progressives think twice about whether slowing the pace of change is a surefire way to achieve progressive goals."

Having made the progressive case for economic growth, Sperling devotes much of his book to programs that could make it more equitable. He is cautious about policies that impose expensive mandates on employers, for the good reason that such mandates may burden firms and slow job creation. He is more enthusiastic about

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government programs, even though these have to be paid for with taxes that could be said to burden economic activity. Thus, he doesn't want to mandate that firms provide retirement plans for their workers. Instead, he wants government to provide 401(k) accounts to everyone, with generous tax-funded matching payments for low-income savers.

I suspect Sperling is right: It's better to try to accomplish progressive goals by using government tax policies and programs than by using employer mandates. But this is a rich and interesting debate that Sperling could have addressed more explicitly. His friend and Clinton administration colleague, former Treasury Secretary Larry Summers, once explained the case for the superior efficiency of employer mandates in an academic paper. If 80 percent of firms are already providing a certain benefit, forcing the other 20 percent to do so represents a relatively small government "distortion" of the economy. But providing a government version of the benefit will cause most firms to quit providing it themselves; taxes will have to be raised significantly in order to provide the government benefit to everyone, so the economic distortion will be larger. A version of this debate has surfaced recently around Wal-Mart, with some progressives supporting local government ordinances to force the retailer to raise wages and provide better benefits, and others (most vocally Jason Furman, another ex-Clintonian Sperling friend) preferring to help Wal-Mart's low-paid workers with government programs, such as an expanded Earned Income Tax Credit.

When it comes to advocating programs, Sperling's persuasiveness varies. He's clearly right to support an expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit, under which government supplements the wages of low-income workers: The program is directly targeted at the working poor and is easy to administer. Likewise, Sperling mounts a devastating attack on the outrageous patchwork of tax breaks for savings that government now provides, which line the pockets of the rich without inducing them to save extra. His proposal to target government saving incentives at the poor is both socially fair and, probably, economically beneficial—the poor barely save now, so any saving that they do represents a net gain for the economy. Sperling also makes a powerful case for Head Start-type programs that improve poor children's performance in school, yielding a more skilled workforce on the one hand and a smaller dysfunctional underclass on the other. The false economy of skimping on education is clear: Indiana once used the number of second graders reading below grade level as a factor in planning prison construction.

But not all of Sperling's proposals seem convincing. He favors empowerment zones, but there's no evidence that these achieve much. He supports protectionist anti-dumping laws, even though he rightly points out that tariffs are a tax that falls most heavily on the poor. And although Sperling praises the Earned Income Tax Credit because it puts money in the hands of poor families that they can spend as they see fit, he is not averse to less flexible programs that offer specific services. He favors federal investment in training programs, for example. But if a progressive tax system gave poor workers more money, couldn't they access training programs without government assistance?

Sperling's book contains so many policy ideas that nobody will agree with all of them. But his broad approach is right. America needs growth: The 1990s showed that growth can be the most effective of all anti-poverty programs. But America needs progressive government, too: Thanks to technology and globalization, inequality is growing. For the most part, the Clinton team combined growth and progressive government deftly. Sperling remains faithful to that formula, and he is right to do so.

Sebastian Mallaby is an editorial writer and columnist for *The Washington Post* and the author of *The World's Banker: A Story of Failed States, Financial Crises, and the Wealth and Poverty of Nations.*

Hugh Sidey, 1927-2005

When new members of our staff would ask me why Hugh Sidey remained on our editorial advisory board even though his politics had become more conservative than the *Monthly*'s, I would tell them this story.

In late December of 1968, as we were preparing our first issue for publication in January, Bill Moyers called to say he was experiencing writer's block on a piece he was doing for us and didn't think he could get it finished in time. I felt we had to have the article, so I asked Hugh Sidey, whom I knew Bill admired for his fair-but-tough coverage of LBJ, to go to New York to interview Bill and make the piece into a Q & A. Hugh agreed, even thought he was frantically busy, writing his regular column and had just taken over as Washington bureau chief of *Time*. We then proceeded to send him on a wild goose chase from Washington to LaGuardia Airport to East 76th Street in Garden City, Long Island, where we had told him he would find Bill, to East 76th Street in New York City, where Bill actually was. But Hugh persevered, and came back with the interview, which we proudly printed in our first issue.

Hugh was an unpretentious man who never forgot his Iowa roots. He avoided fancy words, expressing his common sense observations about the people and events of Washington in a voice as authentically American as Mark Twain's. Although our political philosophies have diverged over the years, we have continued to try to emulate Hugh's common sense and natural style. And of course we will be forever grateful for his help at a crucial moment for the *Monthly*.

—*Charles Peters*

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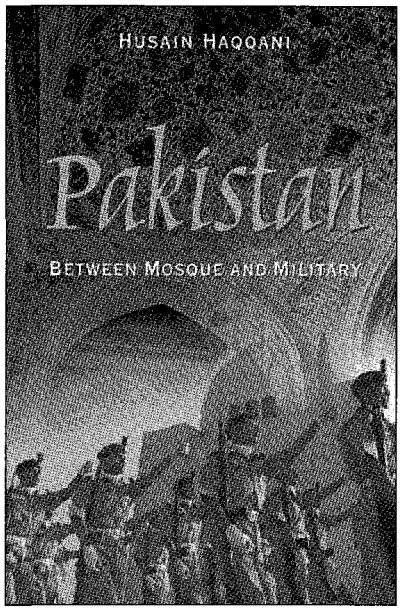
Our Man in Pakistan

Is Musharraf really doing everything he can to help the U.S.? Not even close, says a former Pakistani diplomat.

By Michael Hirsh

Better than any other recent book, Husain Haqqani's brilliant *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* explains the Faustian bargain that the United States has struck with Pakistan in the war on terror. It also illustrates the occasional hypocrisy of George W. Bush's second-term commitment "to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world," as the president put it in his second inaugural address. For as Haqqani lays out in powerful, almost excruciating detail, the Bush administration has repeatedly looked the other way as Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf—uncomfortably balancing the same competing interests of Islamic identity, military necessity and U.S. pressure as most of his predecessors in power—has trampled all over democracy in the service of "stability."

This critique is not by itself a novel one. But Haqqani, a former Pakistani diplomat and government advisor who is now a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, takes our understanding of the issue onto a whole new level by demonstrating that Musharraf, along with his predecessors among Pakistan's military coup-meisters, have made their own Faustian bargain with the devil. In this case, the devil is the military-Islamist alliance that has defined Pakistani national identity since the country's founding.



Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military

By Husain Haqqani

Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, $17.95

While ostensibly cracking down on radical Islamists, Musharraf has—to maintain his power—cut deals with the religious parties that give these extremists succor, in particular the coalition called the Muttahhida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA, or United Action Committee). Musharraf has also barred the parties of his main democratic rivals, former prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif. As a result, in a nationwide referendum in October 2002, Pakistani Islamist parties—which had never earned more than single-digit support from the electorate—secured 11.1 percent of the popular vote and 20 percent of the seats in the lower house of Parliament. Musharraf, Haqqani writes, used "the MMA as his primary opposition to create the illusion that radical Islamist groups were gaining power through democratic means, thus minimizing the prospect that the international community— especially the United States while Pakistan offers support in the war against al Qaeda—would press for democratic reform."

Unquestionably, the Musharraf regime has changed its tune since 9/11 and helped in the capture of some key al Qaeda terrorists, in particular Khalid Shaikh Mohammed. But at the same time, because the Pakistani Islamist groups that sometimes harbor these terrorists are growing in power and influence under Musharraf's constantly deferred promises to reinstate genuine democracy, these groups may no longer be controllable. Taliban still openly roam the streets of Pakistani cities, and the cross-border nexus of support that produced the London subway bombings last summer—in which native Britons went back to Pakistan for what appears to have been suicide-bomber finishing school—has shown just how ingrained the Islamist networks have become in Pakistani society. This presence was also visible during the response to the devastating earthquake last fall. In two of the hardest hit areas, Pakistani Kashmir and the Northwest Frontier Province, radical Islamist organizations were among the most visible relief groups while U.S. and Western aid lagged. Among these groups was a charity run by Sultan Bashir-ud-Bin Mahmood, an Islamist Pakistani who once held talks with al Qaeda about pro-

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ducing biological weapons.

Why does this military-Islamist alliance exist in Pakistan? Haqqani, one of the foremost scholars of modern Pakistan, gives us the full history of the *danse macabre* that Pakistan's religious ideologues and military and intelligence leaders have performed together over the decades. He describes how Pakistani leaders going back to the nation's founder, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, have struggled to build a national identity and have usually settled on only one unifying principle, Islam. This helps explain everything from the military's decades-old effort to build up an Islamist insurgency in disputed Kashmir to Islamabad's successful strategy of aiding and building up the Taliban in neighboring Pakistan during the 1990s.

Haqqani argues that as long as America relies on military strongmen in Islamabad, this internal Faustian bargain will persist. The radical Islamists will always have a safe haven inside Pakistan—a nuclear armed country that also, because of the military-Islamic ethos that rules, will always be a proliferation threat. Although the Bush administration rarely likes to acknowledge this, it is Pakistan's rogue chief scientist A.Q. Khan (who is still under government protection)—not Saddam Hussein, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad or Kim Jong Il—who has made it most likely that the "smoking gun will be a mushroom cloud" in a terrorist attack on America someday.

Haqqani's conclusion is stark: only genuine democracy, rather than Musharraf-Bush ersatz democracy, can bring Pakistan out of its fatal attraction to extremism. This is perhaps the weakest part of Haqqani's argument. After all, Pakistan has had several democratic governments, each of which became deeply corrupt, sparking popular disgust followed by military coups. Still, Pakistan's problems are so knotty and profound that one is hard pressed to find another solution. Haqqani is probably correct when he writes: "Changes in the nature of the Pakistani state can gradually wean the country from Islamic extremism. Musharraf cannot. Unless Islamabad's objectives are redefined to focus on economic

prosperity and popular participation in governance—which the military as an institution remains reluctant to do—the state will continue to turn to Islam as a national unifier."

The conflict with India, for example, is all but irresolvable as long as the military is in charge, he argues, if for no other reason than it supplies an ever-ready rationale for the army's place atop Pakistani politics. The Musharraf regime has deceived the United States and the world about its willingness to engage in rapprochement with New Delhi, just as it deceives Washington about how aggressively it is stamping out the Islamic extremists, Haqqani writes. This, too, is a stealth policy with deep roots in Pakistan's past, going back to Gen. Zia ul Haq's understanding of "the paradox that had emerged from Pakistan's simultaneous pursuit of hostility towards India and military ties with the United States. The semblance of good relations with India had become a prerequisite for Pakistan's security relationship with the United States, which in turn was necessary if Pakistan could even think of military competition with India."

The Bush administration may have come to appreciate, at long last, the double game the Pakistani government has been playing. Last July, to the consternation of Musharraf—who to be fair has tried hard to be an adequate U.S. ally even as he has used increased U.S. aid and support as a way of appeasing his right—the administration announced a new strategic relationship with India. Seen at the time as a way of containing China, Washington's shift may have also been an effort to create a fallback ally if Musharraf's delicate political balancing act falls apart. But by playing great-power alliance games while he is only half-heartedly pushing for democracy, Bush may only help to consolidate military rule in Pakistan. And military rule, as Haqqani argues persuasively, will doom us to confront an Islamist, nuclear-armed Pakistan for a long time to come.

Michael Hirsh, is a senior editor at *Newsweek*, based in Washington, and author of *At War With Ourselves: Why America Is Squandering Its Chance to Build a Better World.*

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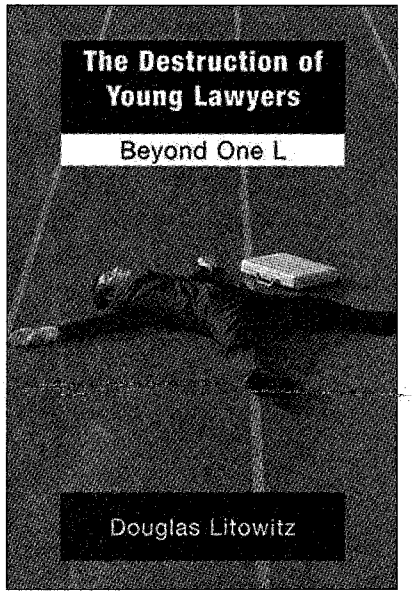
Earnest, Young, & Owing

How law students find themselves trapped in a corporate cartel.

By Avi Klein

Alger Hiss once remarked to his son that "three years at Lewisburg penitentiary is a good corrective to three years at Harvard [Law School]." It is hard to know exactly what he meant by this—Hiss (codename: Advokat) was, after all, a communist spy—but he was neither the first nor the last lawyer to suspect there was something fundamentally wrong with legal education. As Hiss's behavior suggests, law school has the ability—some might say the intention—to engender greed and intellectual myopia, sometimes from the very first day. Young, creative, ambitious men and women, fresh from four years of liberal arts education, enter law school eager to make a change in the world. They leave as dedicated corporate functionaries, consumed with money and prestige, and fearful of upsetting the legal establishment. Douglas Litowitz, in *The Destruction of Young Lawyers: Beyond One L*, exaggerates only a little when he says that law school "breaks people....[I]t is experienced as a trauma, an assault." If law school changes people, it is rarely for the better.

For this reason, popular literature on law school can usually be divided into two groups: the painful memoir and the indignant exposé.



The Destruction of Young Lawyers: Beyond One L
By Douglas Litowitz
University of Akron Press, $32.95

Scott Turow's classic *One L*—which succeeded in scaring two generations of incoming law students witless, and to which Litowitz alludes in his subtitle—is the former, as is *Broken Contract*, by Richard Kahlenberg. In the indignant expose pile are books such as the recent *The People vs. Harvard Law*, by Andrew Peyton Thomas, which accused the school of succumbing to political correctness in its hiring and in its pedagogical decisions. (Turow and Kahlenberg are both Harvard alumni. The school seems to produce a healthy number of both authors and spies—meager evidence, perhaps, that guidance counselors are right when they say you can do anything with a law degree. Litowitz, for his part, attended Northwestern.)

What neither of these two styles of book manages to do, however, is seriously discuss what it is exactly that makes law school so unpleasant. To understand law school—and therefore the grassroots of the legal profession—one has to first grasp the economics supporting it. Here, Litowitz, a professor at Ohio Northern University with a short career in corporate law, stakes out space few practicing attorneys are willing even to survey: The system, Litowitz observes, is designed and sustained by corporate law firms in order to create just the right number of lawyers to fulfill corporate demand, but not so many that the fees of established lawyers are at risk of competition. At the same time, by failing to adequately teach these same lawyers how to actually practice law, and by saddling them with huge debts in the process, the legal establishment "scare[s] young lawyers into cowering submissively before the awesome power of the organized bar and the licensing authorities."

Law students leave the real world behind sometime around orientation, learning instead to construct their lives around their grades and careers, often to a point of absurdity. A single personal anecdote will suffice: On September 11th, 2001, during my first month of law school in Los Angeles, I awoke in time to see the second tower destroyed. My roommate and I made phone calls, wrung our hands, speculated and mourned. And then we thought about morning classes. My torts professor used the Socratic method: Each day he chose a random student or two and grilled them about the previous night's reading. Absence, lack of preparation, and—I assumed—a terrorist attack were no excuse. If I skipped class and the professor mentioned an exception to the laws of negli-

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gence, the students who showed up would know it for the exam—but I wouldn't. And so on a day when three thousand Americans were killed, understanding full well that Los Angeles might be the next target, my fellow students and I decided the most important thing to think about was *res ipsa loquitar.*

The truth is we were more scared about grades than we were about Osama bin Laden. And what we were really thinking about was money. Unlike other professional schools, in law school there exists a direct relationship between the two. Large firms typically will not interview students below the top quarter or third of the class for summer associateships, so the difference between an 'A' and an 'A-'—one or two exceptions noted in a three-hour exam—can mean tens of thousands of dollars forgone. These summer positions—which are really martini-fueled junkets—typically turn into full-time positions after graduation; because they are given out based on first-year grades, competition is intense. Concepts like 'billable hours' and 'boutique firm' are better understood in the first semester than 'venue' and 'probable cause.' Before they understand anything about the function of the law, budding lawyers have the economics down pat.

Public opinion of lawyers is shared by lawyers themselves. "Attorney self-loathing," Litowitz reports, "is a specific response both to the conditions under which lawyers are educated, licensed and regulated and to the economic cauldron into which they are thrown." Students worry that they aren't smart enough, that they aren't competent enough, that they won't earn the grades they need to pay off the average $80,000 of debt the average law student accrues. They begin to hate what they are becoming, yet fear alternative paths. Although only ten percent of incoming law students report mental health problems, forty percent of graduates do.

The self-hatred begins in law school classrooms, where the Socratic method—"a ritual of subjugation that purposely disables a student"—is still used, even if it has softened a touch since Turow's experience in the 1970s. Each answer solicits a further question, until the student is forced either into a mistake or into admitting in front of his peers that he is ignorant. "There is a strong element of sadism in the Socratic interchange," Litowitz writes. "It uses fear and shame as a motivating force, which is easier than motivating people with ideas and worthy goals." Instead of learning out of intellectual interest, students study as an insurance policy against being called upon.

If the Socratic method was actually an effective pedagogical device, the costs might be worth the benefits. But, as Litowitz explains, it has absolutely no merit other than as a way to establish a power differential between the would-be lawyer and

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the already established one. Socrates himself didn't use it to teach—it was just a conversational tool he used on his friends. After all, the teacher is the one who is supposed to explain things to the students, not the other way around. This is especially true with the law, which is "intrinsically complicated to such an extent that students need a professor who makes the subject *less* complicated, not more." As Litowitz neatly puts it, "Is it really necessary to raise the anxiety levels of ninety students just to teach the parol evidence rule?"

By using the Socratic method and emphasizing the case study approach—law school textbooks are mainly compilations of appellate decisions, not original teaching material—law professors fail their students both intellectually and professionally. At graduation, the student knows much about appellate court opinions on various complex matters, but to the exclusion of any practical knowledge of how to actually practice. Students know the difference between a 'fee simple absolute' and a 'fee simple subject to condition subsequent,' but they don't know the first thing about how to write a will that takes these concepts into account. Contracts classes rarely involve looking at one. One can even graduate law school without learning how to format a word processor to include line numbers on the margins. Compare this to medical school, where graduates have spent two years in hospital rotations assisting in surgery and delivering babies, and it is easy to understand why Litowitz calls the typical recent law graduate "a licensed fraud."

If there was a conspiracy to commit such a fraud, it would begin with law school and end with the bar exam. Developed in the 1910s in the same fervor of WASP anti-Semitism that motivated the Ivy League to overhaul its admissions procedures, the bar exam has served ever since to boost lawyer salaries while reducing the numbers of skilled lawyers available. Litowitz points out that although there is absolutely no evidence that the ability to pass the bar is related to how well someone practices law, there is an aggressive psychological element not unlike fraternity hazing that helps perpetuate the system. The bar exam, he writes, "is a rite of passage by which the hopeful lawyer-to-be shows his willingness to do anything to please the state bar authorities in exchange for a license." This humiliation is complete with a bar disclosure form that rivals the CIA's in its comprehensive invasiveness. In Maryland, applicants must present themselves at a character interview—a smilingly impolite episode that permits a senior attorney to inquire after a new lawyer's finances and mental health. The message is that the bar made your career on arbitrary grounds, and it can break it the same way.

Each state has its own exam, though most supplement a day of essay writing with the Multistate Bar Examination (MBE), a two hundred question multiple-choice exam testing common law disciplines including torts, contracts and property. "To pass the bar," writes Litowitz, "it is necessary to have at your fingertips an overwhelming stockpile of one-sentence rules about miscellaneous legal subjects." If lawyers practiced like doctors, instant recall would be worth examining. But they don't. When you hire a lawyer, most of what you pay for is his research ability, not his immediate knowledge, and very few corporate lawyers handle any of the issues being tested. Even so, students are placed through a wringer in which they must dedicate two months of study, paying thousands of dollars for preparation courses, all under the absurd presumption that their "competence" is being tested.

Of course, what makes a competent lawyer one year may make an incompetent lawyer the next. "When scores on the MBE started to rise in the 1990s," Litowitz writes, "bar examiners were not delighted: instead they raised the passing cutoff point to ensure that an even greater number of students would fail." As a rule, the more popular a state is, the more difficult the exam. Although there was no evidence lawyer quality was suffering, the Florida bar "now fails twice as many first time takers as it did ten years ago," all in order to avoid "putting the people of Florida at risk." The Sunshine State, not coincidentally, is also a popular retirement home for East Coast attorneys who might be tempted to set up small practices for extra income.

This is all particularly absurd when one considers that most jurisdictions require out-of-staters to retake the MBE to be admitted. If John Roberts decided to leave the Supreme Court and retire to Virginia, keeping a small office for occasional appellate work, he would still have to go for two days next July and sit in a hot auditorium filling in multiple-choice bubbles about constitutional law. (That would be the least of his indignities: Test-takers in Virginia are required to wear both business suits and sneakers or other quiet shoes—Adidas poking out beneath their Brooks Brothers trousers in a Paul Bremer-inspired look.)

One additional distasteful characteristic of the bar exam is that it artificially deflates the number of minority attorneys. First-time bar passage rates for African-Americans are only 61 percent, compared to 90 percent for whites. While law schools have aggressively developed affirmative action programs for both students and faculty, the bar associations have not succeeded in meeting the needs of minority communities. The effect is especially pernicious because, according to a University of Michigan study, minority lawyers are far more likely than their white classmates to pursue public interest jobs.

After cataloging the flaws of law school and the bar exams, Litowitz moves on to the life of young lawyers. Having just narrowly escaped that fate, I found his descriptions faintly horrifying: seemingly independent adults required to account in a ledger for every eight minutes of their time;

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licensed professionals who have no contact with their clients, even if those clients are mainly faceless corporations; law firms creating fewer and fewer equity partnerships.

For many young corporate attorneys, the firm is a sweatshop, and their own labor is merely legal-ruled piecework. "The law is crowded—interesting—and full of despair," wrote Archibald MacLeish to his parents after a few disappointing years as a lawyer. "It offers its own rewards, but none other." To his friend Dean Acheson he wrote, "If I correctly analyze my emotions, I am attracted to the law by considerations the most superficial imaginable." Lawyers suffer high rates of mental illness, job dissatisfaction, alcoholism and drug abuse, and divorce. Sandra Day O'Connor calls them "a profoundly unhappy lot."

Mitigating all this personal unhappiness, of course, are the fat paychecks lawyers receive each month—it is hard to feel too sorry for them. The real losers here are the millions of Americans who can't afford the legal representation they need. The incarcerated may receive a court-appointed attorney, but a person in a dispute with a landlord, or on the wrong end of a collections agent, will be lucky to find a law school clinic to assist him. In the end, such a person will always fall victim to rapacious interests that can afford a legion of intimidating legal shock-troopers. We are used to thinking that America has too many lawyers. The truth is, the lawyers we have are just the wrong kind. Litowitz refers to a survey of students from 117 law schools that "found that two-thirds of the respondents were so deeply in debt that they could not even consider a career in public service," and only 5 percent of law students actually follow through. Law schools are good at serving the interests of corporate America. But it's the rest of us who have to fight them off, usually alone.

Avi Klein, an intern at *The Washington Monthly*, is licensed to practice law in Maryland. He never has.

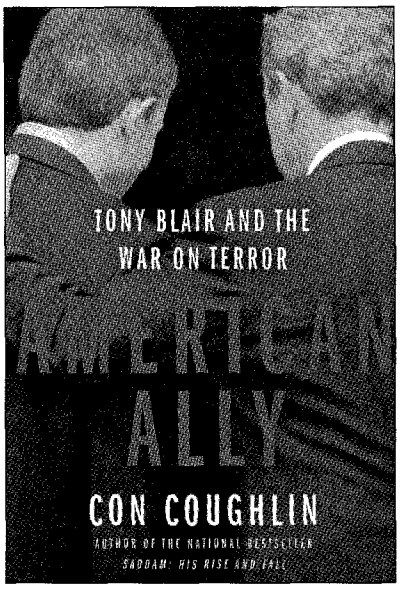
Blair Hitch Project

The real reason Britain's prime minister stood by Bush on Iraq.

By Isaac Chotiner

In the spring of 1999, Tony Blair received a furious call from Bill Clinton. Policymakers in both London and Washington were concerned that the war in Kosovo was not proceeding smoothly. Disputes over ground troops and logistics had found their way, anonymously, into the British and American press. When Blair picked up the phone, Clinton lit into him, accusing the prime minister of not adequately controlling the leakers in his own administration. The episode rather surprised the new premier, who had been enjoying a rapport with the second-term president. But there was no mistaking the message from Clinton, according to the author of a new book on Blair and his relationship with America: "Washington was happy to have Britain as an ally, but only so long as Britain followed Washington's agenda." This would not be the last time Tony Blair was confronted with being the decidedly junior partner in his country's "special relationship."

Con Coughlin's *American Ally: Tony Blair and the War on Terror* is a useful guide to the way Great Britain has conducted its foreign policy since "New Labour" swept into power in 1997. A hawkish, conservative British journalist, Coughlin has written a brisk summary of the international crises of the Blair years. Unfortunately, Coughlin seems unwilling to state for the record what his own reporting suggests—that Blair went along with the Iraq war primarily out of pragmatism and a desire to maintain Britain's historic closeness with America.



American Ally: Tony Blair and the White House
By Con Coughlin
Ecco Press, $26.95

What does make Coughlin's book important, however, is that it highlights the inability of (mostly conservative) commentators to differentiate between liberal internationalists like Blair and the neoconservatives who led the charge for war in America. While liberal hawks are often willing to use force to prevent humanitarian violations and ethnic cleansing, neoconservatives are much more prone to acting unilaterally and without the consent of international institutions. By not adequately explaining this important distinction, Coughlin's analysis of Blair's motives comes up short.

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On the whole, Coughlin's discussion of Blair does not offer much beyond that of his fellow countrymen, Peter Riddell and Peter Stothard, who have both recently published helpful books on the prime minister and his foreign policy. Additionally, these two works were on the whole more engaging to read, if for no other reason than that the writers had an ear for interesting anecdotes and personality quirks among the major players. The closest Coughlin gets to anything resembling gossip is a paragraph mentioning the decision by Cherie Blair, the prime minister's wife, to confront George W. Bush about his robust support for the death penalty. Unfortunately, we do not get to read how the president responded, and the chapter ends with a quote from Mr. Blair about "private conversations." Coughlin seems to delight in the secrecy of it all, but the reader may find himself a little disappointed.

When it comes to his country's relationship with America, Blair has always argued that England must remain close with its powerful ally. He has often said that "we are all internationalists," and his firm belief in the increasing interconnectedness of the world has led him to state time and again that British ties to the United States are vital to its economic prosperity and global security. The fact that the two most successful British prime ministers of the last 65 years—Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher—shared strong bonds with their respective opposite numbers across the Atlantic must also factor into every premier's thinking.

Though Blair lacked foreign policy experience before becoming prime minister, he has always held a confident belief that he could occupy a central role in world affairs. Upon entering office, he quickly set out to establish himself as someone who was willing to use force for what he saw as progressive ends. This led, most notably, to his strong backing of the NATO bombing campaign to stop ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, and to a willingness to intervene in Sierra Leone and East Timor.

The prime minister's thinking is probably best captured by a 1999 speech in Chicago about international affairs, whose importance is aptly noted by Coughlin: "If NATO were able to stop Milosevic in Kosovo, it would send a warning shot to other dictators—such as Saddam Hussein. So far as Blair was concerned, the international community could no longer regard 'acts of genocide' as a 'purely internal matter.'" Blair's support of Clinton's Kosovo actions had the added benefit of keeping Britain closely allied with the United States. Coughlin's insightful descriptions of the sometimes contentious diplomatic relationship between the two leaders (Blair was always much more willing than Clinton use ground troops against Serbian forces) serve to remind the reader that Blair's hawkishness is not simply a (relatively recent) result of wanting to please Bush.

Most Americans remember Blair's visit to America soon after the attacks of 9/11, and the warm reception that accompanied it. Around the time that Blair received a huge ovation from Congress, polls showed that he was viewed positively by an astounding 75 percent of Americans. Despite the outward solidarity, however, Blair and his advisers were acutely aware that dealing with Washington—always a delicate balancing act—was about to become more difficult now that the country was feeling particularly vulnerable. One British official tells Coughlin, "We had learned the lesson that you needed to be very careful dealing with a superpower. They always want to give the impression that they are leading the way." And as Blair had learned with Clinton, the public airing of disputes would not go over well with any American administration.

Blair's impassioned rhetorical attacks on Saddam, as well as his no-holds-barred defense of Bush before and after the Iraq invasion, certainly gave the appearance that the prime minister himself shared the president's belief that the security of a post 9/11 world demanded the removal of Saddam from power. This is certainly the foundation of Coughlin's own argument about Blair. He is right to note that from the time Blair took office, the prime minister spoke about the threat Iraq posed, and supported limited bombing campaigns against no-fly-zone violations by the dictator throughout the 1990s. And it's true that Saddam's record of tyrannical rule and human-rights violations was of

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great concern to someone who cared about these things as much as Blair.

But Coughlin's explanations for why Blair ultimately decided to go along with the Bush administration do not add up. On one page, he writes that "[Blair's] view was that unless there was clear evidence of Iraqi complicity in 9/11, there was no justification for an attack on Baghdad." Yet on the next page, Coughlin approvingly quotes a Blair adviser who explains that the prime minister's decision to get involved with tackling Saddam's flagrant violations of international law came about because he had been profoundly affected and changed by 9/11.

Why the change? Coughlin seems to argue that the more Blair looked at 9/11, the more he realized something had to be done about Saddam. Additionally, Coughlin claims that Blair became more bullish on attacking Iraq after witnessing the coalition's success in Afghanistan. "Blair was independently coming to a conclusion similar to Bush's on how to conduct the next phase in the war on terror," he writes. But it is rather convenient timing that Blair's epiphany came at exactly the moment that the Bush administration started to focus its attention on Iraq. A few pages later, Coughlin explores what is perhaps the more likely reason for Blair's change of opinion. He describes a British cabinet meeting on Iraq thusly: "Blair listened attentively to the discussion but 'he was very firm with us about where he saw that Britain's national interest lay,' said Cook [former Foreign Secretary and at that time leader of the House of Commons Robin Cook]. Blair told his cabinet colleagues, 'We must stay close to America.'"

During this time, as both Washington and London began to promote the idea of regime change, Blair began what Coughlin calls "a subtle but important realignment" in the way he addressed the threat Iraq posed, arguing that the rogue state might give weapons to terrorists, a danger that after 9/11 could not be ignored. Coughlin implies that Blair believed this danger to be real and therefore confidently based his case for the war on the threat of Iraqi-sponsored terrorism. In fact, however, Coughlin notes in the very same paragraph that the intelligence reports Blair was receiving did not claim this, but were instead arguing that Saddam was likely to keep any and all weapons for himself. Why, then, would Blair push this new line? Coughlin reports that the Bush administration began making the same case at the same time, but again, the convenience of the timing does not strike the author as suspicious.

Coughlin compounds this credulity by failing to note the very significant differences between Blair's brand of liberal interventionism and the Bush administration's bare-knuckled neoconservatism. He does show that Blair was more interested in confronting threats multilaterally, and that he kept pushing the president to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian problem. But the journalist never really makes the fundamental point that while the war in Iraq may have been supported by some liberal hawks on both sides of the Atlantic, it is extremely unlikely that they would have ever untaken the invasion if they had been in control of the American and British governments. Few, after all, took up the cause of war with Iraq as speedily as their neoconservative counterparts, many of whom focused their sights on Saddam in the immediate weeks and months following 9/11.

There's no reason to doubt that at some level Blair honestly believed that invading Iraq was the right and just course. But like many hawkish Democrats in the United States who supported the invasion, it's also hard to believe that other political motivations were not at play. One of those, for Blair, was the belief that by openly supporting Bush the prime minister might garner some leverage to shape the course of events. And around the edges, he seems to have been able to alter America's actions. Along with Colin Powell, he convinced the administration to take the case against Iraq to the U.N. Security Council. And much to the consternation of Washington hawks, he ensured that the United States would go back to the U.N. for a second (and ultimately fruitless) time. But as Coughlin makes abundantly clear, America was, on the big issues, going to do what it wanted. Blair clearly understood this (memos from his office released after the war show that the prime minister knew the war was inevitable), and he made the calculation that staying close to the United States and using his influence in any way he could was the most responsible thing to do.

Was it, in the end, worth it? Should Blair have gone along with an invasion and occupation that has divided his party and enraged his country? If you believe, as some on the left do, that had Blair refused to support Bush's plans, the train of war might have been stopped in its tracks, then the answer is clearly no. But if you take the view, as I do, that the war was going to happen regardless of what Britain did, then the answer seems to be most certainly yes. Blair's efforts to moderate the Bush administration's bellicose rhetoric and stubbornness can only be seen as good. That being said, Blair still went along with a war that most of his country—and many in the United States—view as illegitimate and immoral. Indeed, there is no doubt that the prime minister's resolute support of the invasion will be a part of his legacy that many of his fellow countrymen will always despise.

Still, there is reason for progressives to be happy that Blair has maintained such close ties to the United States. By supporting the war when no other major world leader would, Blair became Bush's closest ally and enhanced his visibility as an important international figure. He has used that clout to take the lead on a number of issues, from debt relief and foreign aid to ending farm subsidies. In the case of assisting the world's poorest nations we have seen, thanks largely to his leadership, substantial—if incomplete—progress. Along the way, Blair has nudged his partners in Washington to support progressive causes they might otherwise have ignored. Ironically, then, Blair's decision to go along with a war he rightly saw as inevitable was in the end a boon to progressives, as the prime minister's leading role on the world stage has helped move forward many of the issues they care deeply about.

Isaac Chotiner is an intern at *The Washington Monthly*.

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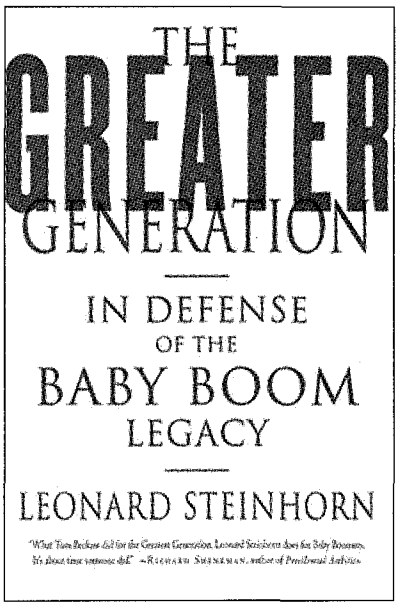
The Aging of Aquarius

Boomers can take credit for the '60s if they accept blame for the '70s and '80s.

By Jamie Malanowski

With the oldest of the Baby Boom generation now starting to turn 60, it seems inevitable that we will soon be inundated with books and TV specials assessing the impact of this huge cohort on American society. *The Greater Generation*, by American University professor Leonard Steinhorn, can be considered a very sympathetic brief for the defense. No doubt some opportunistic right-wing scribe is energetically pitching Regnery Press on the merits of prosecuting Boomers for their various crimes against humanity, even as some third party is pounding out an even-handed assessment. Hopefully at some point, Friends of the Forests will step in and remind everyone that a generation is an awfully large category to make meaningful generalizations about, and perhaps we should spare the trees. But for now, back to Leonard Steinhorn.

Readers will recall that it was Tom Brokaw's great good luck as a journalist, as a reporter of news, to uncover that back in the 1930s and 1940s, a large mass of young Americans had to suffer, a) the trials and deprivations of the Great Depression, then b) fight a terrible war —a "world war" in the parlance of the time—against countries bent on global domination. Not only did Brokaw have the courage to bring to light this virtually hidden chapter of our history, but he or an associate had the marketing savvy to title the book *The Greatest Generation*, an irresistibly flattering phrase which sustained the book through many printings and multiple sequels. I'm not sure, but I think Brokaw meant the phrase sincerely, if not exactly scientifically. It's not like he sat down and assigned coefficients for hardships and accomplishments, or calculated what the ratio between opportunity and outcome should be, or figured out whether one should subtract for embarrassments and shortcomings, or actually divide by them, all in an effort to come up with an equation that would yield a Greatest Generation Coefficient by which we would rank Founders and Boomers, World War II troopers and Gilded Age inventors, Civil Warriors and Manifest Destineers. No, Brokaw just grabbed a pithy, vivid title, and skipped off to the best-seller list.



The Greater Generation: In Defense of the Baby Boomer Legacy
By Leonard Steinhorn
Thomas Dunne Books, $24.95

Nor has Leonard Steinhorn gone the scientific route, but he certainly wants to jump into this Greatest Generation discussion. However, it's not immediately clear where he means to land. He doesn't seem to argue that Boomers are greater than the Greatest Generation. After all, he didn't call his book "An Even Greater Generation," with the implication that we have superseded our elders. He called it "The Greater Generation," which implies that he might be satisfied coming in second to "The Greatest Generation," comfortably ahead of "The Great Generation," "The Good Generation," and "The Generation That Needed Improvement." He even starts off the book giving props to the World War II-sters. "No one should ever doubt the valor and sacrifice of the World War II generation.... This was the generation that sacrificed their blood...suffered through the Great Depression...bravely answered the call...a horrid and heroic struggle....Normandy and Iwo Jima...they deserve every accolade they've been given."

However, if any of you thinks the next word could possibly be something other than "but," I have a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sell you.

Steinhorn's "but" is a big one, and justly aimed. He points out that the Greatest Generation came home from World War II to an America

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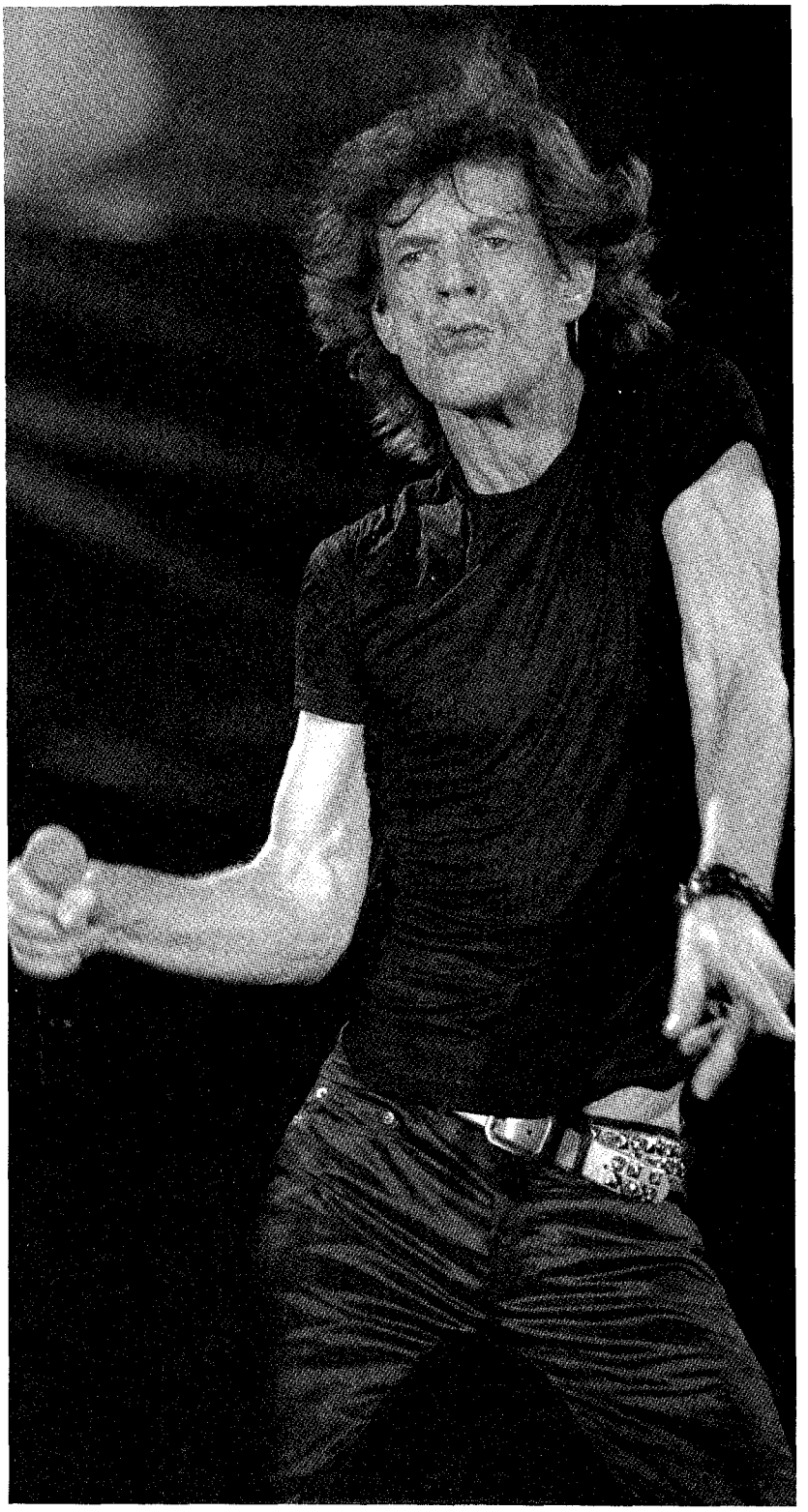
that was racially segregated, restricted by sex roles, bigoted against gays and environmentally ignorant, and that it wasn't until the flowering of the Boomers in the sixties that progress in these areas became a reality. And in that progress, he stakes the claim for his generation's superiority.

Steinhorn is an ardent and impassioned Boomer-booster, and in an era when liberal has become a label that even liberals wear reluctantly, he is providing a very useful service. The change in America that has accompanied this generation's march through life has been profound, and because America changed, the world followed. For all the sideshows that encumbered the '60s— the sex, the drugs, the music, the hair —the ultimate legacy of the period is a Great Moral Leap Forward, such that America is now more publicly committed to equal opportunity, diversity, fairness and environmental preservation than at any time in our history. And the fruits of this progress are among our country's greatest ornaments.

But to say that these triumphs belong exclusively to the Boomer generation is to give my contemporaries more credit than is deserved. Assigning credit for historical development is a lot harder than deciding which pitcher in a ballgame deserves the win. George H.W. Bush may have been president when the Berlin Wall fell, but that doesn't mean that he ended communism. The fact that Boomers came of age in this era of social progress doesn't mean that they should get all the credit. For one thing, there were an awful lot of Boomers who spent the sixties surfing, listening to the Beach Boys, and limiting their participation in the events of the era to growing sideburns. There were, for that matter, even Boomers who were antagonistic to the great movements of the period —for instance, George W. Bush. In addition, a lot of the great leaders and heroes of the Boomer generation weren't Boomers. Martin Luther King Jr. wasn't a Boomer. Bob Dylan wasn't. The Kennedys, Lenny Bruce,



Barry Commoner, Ralph Nader— none of them were Boomers. And it's not as though they were stray prophets wandering around until Boomers discovered them —they were the spear tips of large bodies of people who shared their thinking. And beyond that, lavishing credit on the Boomers undervalues the great moral struggle that our parents underwent to open their hearts and their minds, and actually change. Many Boomers accepted their politics with as much ease as it took to memorize the lyrics to "Eve of Destruction;" it was our parents, obviously with greater or lesser degrees of success, who had to over-

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come life-long ways of thinking to accept a black person as their neighbor, or a woman as their boss, or a gay man as their son.

Still, Boomers deserve a lot of credit, and Steinhorn does a matchless job of dishing it out. "In the 1960s," he eloquently writes, "both Baby Boomers and Greatest Generation Americans witnessed the same society and its many flaws. One made the choice to accept and defend the status quo. The other made the choice to advance the principles of democracy, equality and freedom... to end the hypocrisy of proclaiming but not observing our national ideals, and to address the gap between the promise of American life and the reality of that life for so many Americans. The Greatest Generation deserves every bit of credit for protecting democracy when it was threatened; but Baby Boomers deserve even more credit for enriching and fulfilling its promise."

But Steinhorn is entirely too forgiving of this generation's shortcomings. We may have been behind the political and social fervor of the sixties, but we were also behind the narcissism of the seventies and the materialism of the eighties and after. Since the Reagan administration, when Boomers shed their shag vests and disco shoes for power suits, Boomers have enthusiastically bought into the corporate values that dominate our lives. Boomers have backed Bush, and his tax cuts, and his war (of course, we've also been against Bush, his tax cuts and his war—that just goes to show the poverty of making sweeping generalizations about generations.) The point is that history is an eminently forgettable subject, and if Steinhorn thinks Boomers don't get enough credit now for making the world a fairer, more decent place, wait until the only things our sons and daughters remember us for is a whopping deficit, global warming and endless war.

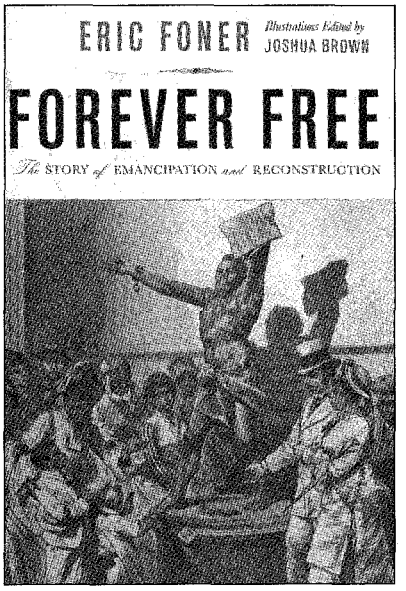
Jamie Malanowski is the managing editor of *Playboy*.

Andrew Johnson's Good Deed

How the tragedy of Reconstruction contained the seeds of the Civil Rights movement.

By Jennifer Weber

Reconstruction is, arguably, the most frustrating period in American history. The Civil War having ended, the possibilities for reshaping the nation were vast. But Abraham Lincoln, who had the political skills, not to mention the political capital, to build a better, fairer nation, was dead. In his place was the insecure incompetent, Andrew Johnson. A former tailor's apprentice from Tennessee whose wife taught him how to write and helped him improve his shaky reading skills, Johnson came into office claiming to have no truck with Southern plantation owners. The planters quickly figured out, though, that if they humbled themselves before the new president, they generally could have their way—at the expense of the freedmen. Among the worst results of their newfound power were "Black Codes," laws adopted in many Southern states in the year after defeat to regulate African Americans. These were particularly odious in Mississippi and South Carolina, whose Black Codes sought to virtually reestablish slavery (for instance, an unemployed black man would be arrested as a vagrant, then hired out by the state to work off the fine). Northern Republicans in Congress, too, had their way with Johnson,



Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction
By Eric Foner
Knopf, $27.50

pushing him aside (ultimately impeaching him) and passing a series of progressive laws and constitutional amendments. But with the onset of a financial panic in 1873 and Northerners tiring of Reconstruction, this period of promise petered out. Reconstruction ended ignominiously in a political deal over the presidency that ushered in the era of Jim Crow.

To the extent that Americans think about Reconstruction, most tend to

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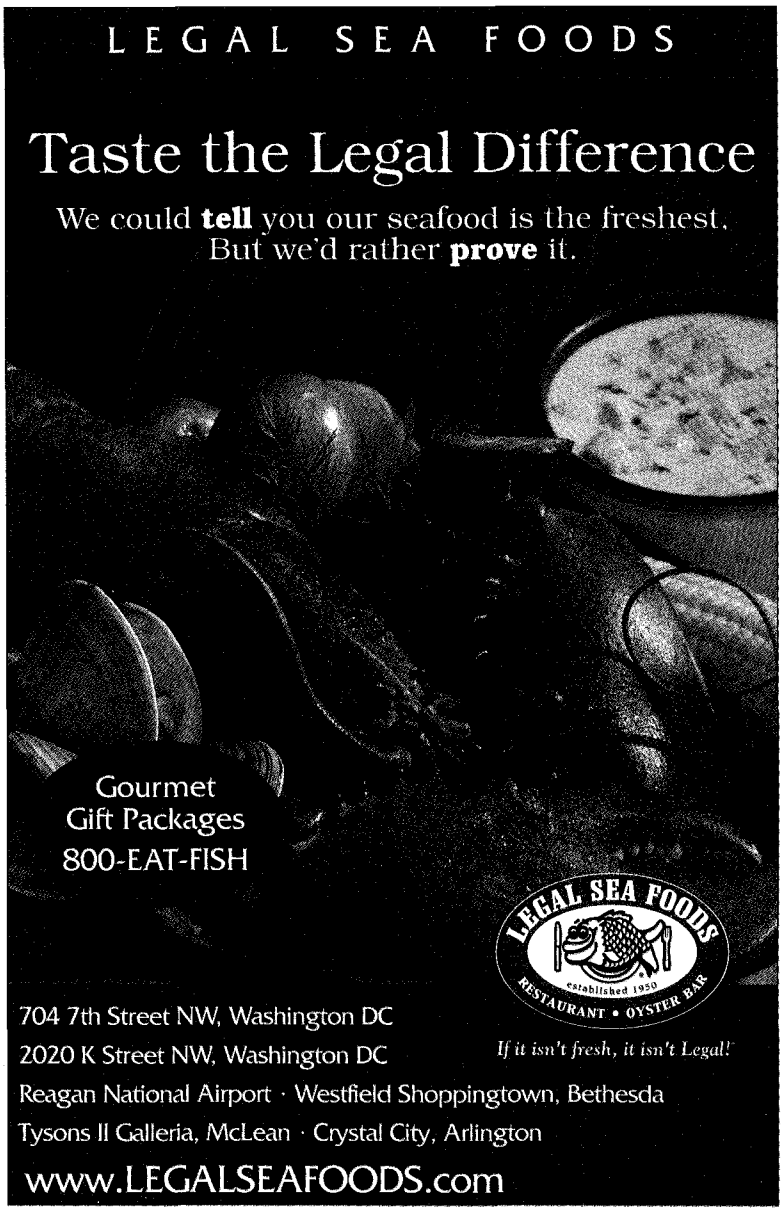
consider it as either a missed opportunity for African Americans or a disastrous experience for white Southerners. The truth is, though most Americans rarely think about Reconstruction at all. In *Forever Free: The Story of Emancipation and Reconstruction*, Columbia Professor Eric Foner tries to elevate the period in the public's imagination and to show that for blacks, Reconstruction as a glass half-full rather than one-half empty. Paradoxically, Johnson played crucial role in this. His vanity, stubbornness, and bad judgment—along with white Southerners' refusal to acknowledge defeat, and the full implications of emancipation—may have actually have helped the freed slaves achieve greater political rights for this brief period than they otherwise would have. Moreover, Foner argues, Reconstruction laid down the legal and constitutional foundation for what would become, a century later, the civil rights movement.

Johnson's ineptitude and the Southerners' continued belligerence pushed moderate Republicans to the left, resulting in a more radical Reconstruction than might have happened otherwise. Furious congressional Republicans fought bitterly with Johnson, a Democrat who was recruited to run with Lincoln on the Union ticket, over which branch would control Reconstruction. The battle culminated in Johnson's impeachment. When Congress wrested control of Reconstruction from the president, it passed progressive laws such as the Civil Rights Bill of 1866, which specified that anyone (except Native Americans) who was born in the United States was an American citizen and enjoyed equality before the law. Blacks, like whites, could own or rent property, enter into contracts, and, in the great American tradition, sue people. The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, adopted in 1866 and ratified in 1868, demanded due process and equal protection under the law. These powerful clauses would be the foundation of Civil Rights rulings from the 1930s on but attracted little attention in the 19th and early 20th centuries, making this the stealth amendment. The Fifteenth Amendment, passed and ratified in 1869, extended the vote to African-American men, but alienated white women who had been longtime allies of the abolitionists because women of all races were intentionally left out as beneficiaries of this amendment.

The immediate consequences of these legislative changes were profound. "By the early 1870s, biracial democratic government, something unknown in American history, was functioning effectively in many parts of the South, and men only recently released from bondage were exercising genuine political power," Foner writes. The process was less a fulfillment of the Revolution's pledges than "a radical repudiation of the nation's actual practice of the previous seven decades." As many as 2,000 black men held office, mostly in the South, ranging from justice of the peace to United States senator. Thousands more were involved in Republican Party politics and in shaping opinion as newspaper editors and ministers. Up to 90 percent of eligible black voters cast ballots. African Americans did not "control" the South, as the story has been handed down, but were active participants in shaping the politics of the postwar South, Foner points out. To this day, it is not unusual to read in the paper that so-and-so is the first African American to serve in his post—or serve in so high a position—since Reconstruction.

While the political changes were profound, so were the economic ones. The closest analogy in our time would



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be to the collapse of Communism. Suddenly, slaves who grew up with a set of expectations about how they would be cared for, the kind of work they would do and where they would live had options. For some, this was liberating. For others, it was frightening. And still others, especially the elderly, found themselves without means. Whites whose livelihoods and lifestyles were predicated on having bondsmen were left equally at sea—at least in the first few months of Reconstruction. Unfortunately, neither Foner nor anyone else has written a study that effectively gets across the real economic and psychological upheaval that Southerners, black and white, experienced.

Even as they faced the formidable difficulty of finding their way economically, former slaves were determined to make up for lost opportunities in other parts of their lives. Mostly, they sought out the things that were hallmarks of any respectable Victorian community, and this effort to do things that "normal" white Americans did make up the heart of Forever Free. Former slaves and their children went to freedmen's schools, many of which were underwritten by Northern white organizations. They learned to read and write and do math. They formed their own churches and paid for the land and building themselves. Desperate to reconnect with lost—or sold—friends and family members, some freedmen traveled the South looking for their loved one. Those who had jumped the broom in the slave days now got married—legally. Seeking Victorian respectability, many husbands discouraged their wives from working for money or sometimes even working in the family fields. The thought was that, like white women, these former slaves should stay at home, raise the children and tend the garden. When times got hard, though, that commitment went by the wayside in many a black family.

Politically, times got very hard for many freedmen in the South around 1867. When African Americans gained political power, white supremacist/terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan formed to intimidate black politicians and voters. This brings us to a central weakness of the book. Foner does a fine job telling the story from the African-American perspective, but he offers little insight into what motivated whites. That they were racist is wildly obvious, that they were on the defensive is a clear subtext. While the planter class is the villain just offstage, the yeomen do not even seem to be in the wings. What was their role in this drama? Foner is so focused on telling the story of African Americans bravely insisting on their own dignity, asserting their rights, and moving forward in the world that he fails to explore the motivations of Southern whites who reacted so strongly against them.

After the Panic of 1873 hit, the North became increasingly weary of Reconstruction. What began with so much promise ended with a Faustian bargain over who would occupy the White House in 1877. The previous year's presidential race between Democrat Samuel Tilden and Republican Rutherford B. Hayes featured disputed returns from South Carolina, Louisiana, and, yes, Florida. To make a long story short, Hayes's people reached an understanding with Southern Democrats who installed him in the White House and removed what was left of the Union forces from Southern capitals. Republican governments, many of them featuring black politicians, quickly fell apart. The era of Jim Crow had arrived. Not until the Civil Rights Movement would African Americans begin to reclaim some of what they had lost.

This is Foner's third book on Reconstruction. His first, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877, published in 1988, was widely acclaimed. Its offspring, A Short History of Reconstruction, is standard reading in college Civil War courses. Yet neither of these books—nor those by any other historian—has particularly succeeded in penetrating the contemporary public's indifference toward Reconstruction or in producing an awareness of that period's role in modern America. Clearly frustrated that "this critical moment in our nation's history has failed to establish itself in the national memory, at least with any accuracy or full depth of understanding," Foner Forever Free attempts to reach a wider audience.

This volume differs from the others in important ways. First, it focuses more on individuals. One of the off-putting things about many works on Reconstruction is that the human element gets lost amid the swirl of legislation, party conventions, and court battles. Even in discussions about such dramatic events as Klan assaults, one typically has the sense of Larger Forces at Work, rather than individual people making individual decisions that affect other living, breathing human beings. Foner delves deeply into the politics of the time, to be sure, but he spends much more time showing how political decisions affected real people.

Another change that differs greatly from Foner's previous works is the visual presentation in Forever Free. The book is richly illustrated with rarely seen images strikingly laid out. Indeed, this book has the potential to become a model for future history books that target a broader audience. Between chapters, is a "visual essay": a number of portraits, political cartoons, and depictions of events accompanied by a somewhat pedantic interpretive text written by Joshua Brown, an historian of visual culture at City University of New York. This has the unfortunate effect of making the reader feel like she is sitting through a beautifully illustrated if rather dull art history lecture.

Foner wrote this book to spur more interest in Reconstruction and its centrality in American history. Perhaps he will get his wish with this thoughtful and engaging book, and Americans will begin to see more clearly what the promises of Reconstruction were and what the costs of its failures have been. Hurricane Katrina held a mirror to the nation and showed us the ugly inequalities that still plague America. Forever Free is a timely reminder not only of how we got to where we are today, but also of the immense and long-lasting toll of squandered opportunity.

Jennifer Weber is an assistant professor of history at the University of Kansas. Her book, *Copperheads*, will be published next year by Oxford University Press.

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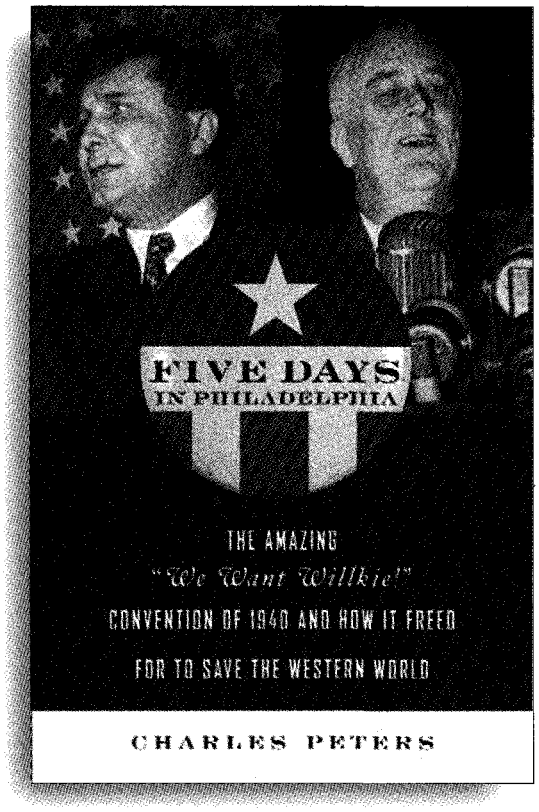

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